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The Church of Pentecost

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THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST.

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THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST

BY

BISHOP J. M. THOBURN.

CALCUTTA: METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE.
NEW YORK: EATON AND MAINS, 150, Fifth Avenue.
LONDON: C. H. KELLY, 2, Castle Street, City Road, E.C.

1899.

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

PRINTED AT
THE METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE,
46, Dharamtala Street, Calcutta.

PREFACE.

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THE following pages were written, for the most part, during the brief intervals of leisure which could be secured in the midst of a very busy life, and no doubt will bear many marks of insufficient preparation and imperfect work. The only leisure enjoyed in writing the book has been that found on steamship voyages in the Eastern seas, and this of course precluded the use of libraries and books of reference of every kind. How great a disadvantage this has been can readily be appreciated by every one who has had even a limited experience in writing for the press.

The thought of writing such a book was first suggested many years ago while attending a "holiness" camp meeting in the United States. While there appeared to be a general agreement in doctrine among those in charge of the meeting, and while there were frequent references to Pentecost, there yet seemed to be a wide difference between the simplicity of the New Testament story, and the minute definitions, the many restrictions, and the limited experiences of the modern

Christian assembly. At Pentecost the manifestation was clear, complete, and satisfying. It was "full" as a spiritual manifestation, and carried with it all the spiritual elements which enter into the organization of a Christian society. It set forth all which could be heard in the modern assembly, and very much in addition. While noting these points the thought was suggested that the modern Church had much to learn from the story of the first Christian Church, and as the years passed, a wider observation, embracing many phases of Christian life and many departments of Christian labour, greatly strengthened this impression.

More than once an effort has been made to induce writers better equipped for the work, and having leisure enough to give the subject the thorough treatment which it merits, to undertake the task which is so imperfectly set forth in the following pages; but failing to enlist others in the work, it has seemed better to cast this little offering upon the literary waters than to let the matter drop altogether.

J. M. T.

Bombay, December 1, 1898.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTORY

I

INTRODUCTORY

THE Church of Pentecost should never be confounded, as it too often is, with the later and much less noble organization known among the early Christians as the Church of Jerusalem. The former was fully inaugurated when the Spirit was poured out on the little assembly in the upper room, and its extraordinary career was brought to a close at the death of Stephen, when the great body of believers were scattered abroad, and thus thrust out to begin the great missionary work for which they had received a special commission, and for which every true church of Jesus Christ exists. As the storm of persecution began to subside, and members of the scattered flock began to return, the church resumed its former functions, but not in its former spirit. Much of the old-time fervour remained, and yet it soon became apparent that a lower key-note had been struck. A narrow and intolerant spirit began to manifest itself, and the long and bitter contest between the adherents of a narrow Judaism and the advocates of Christian freedom, began at Jerusalem, and continued

until the final destruction of the city. The apostles lingered in and around the place for a few years, the church was venerated, and its decisions respected by the general body of Christians in the East, but the glory of the Pentecostal era had in a large measure departed. With the death of Stephen, and the dispersion of the early believers the brief history of the Church of Pentecost, as a distinct organization, was brought to a close. Its work, however, was not finished. Its story fills one of the brightest pages in human history, and in these latter days this simple story comes to us with lessons which all thoughtful Christians need to ponder well.

Authorities differ as to the length of time which elapsed between the day of Pentecost and the death of Stephen. Some maintain that Stephen suffered martyrdom about four years after the organization of the church, while others, comprising a large majority, put the date three years later.* Whichever date is adopted, it becomes a matter of surprise that so much could have been accomplished in so short a time. The very fragmentary

*The recently expressed opinion of Harnack that the death of Stephen and dispersion of the first Christians occurred within the first year after the death of our Saviour, has attracted attention, but thus far has met with very limited acceptance.

history which has come down to us omits nearly all details, and yet it is evident that immense progress had been made in various directions, and a vast amount of preparatory work accomplished in the way of preparing the early disciples for the difficult task which awaited them. If it be said that the Christians of that early day had nothing to do in the way of preparing literature, maturing systems of theology, promoting either general or special education, erecting places of worship, or completing schemes of elaborate organization such as churches are expected to present in our day, it is sufficient to reply that in the absence of all these agencies which modern Christians generally find so helpful, the success of the early Christians becomes still more marked. It was a success which was largely, and, indeed, chiefly, confined to the development of a high order of character. If the Christians of the Pentecostal Church did not found schools, or construct systems of theology, they certainly succeeded in developing the purest standard of piety and the most noble type of character which the world has yet seen.

When in these days of elaborate statistical tables we speak of notable results accomplished by a body of Christian workers, it seems to be expected that these results will at once be formally

tabulated, and placed on record; but the best possible results are often such as cannot be expressed in figures, or even in language. A noble character finds no place in a column of figures, and the equipment of a man like Stephen cannot exactly be expressed in human language, and yet it is a main object of a Christian Church to develop character, and to equip believers for noble achievement. It is too often assumed that pure principles, and lofty standards of Christian living, are simply lessons to be learned from teachers or books, and put in practice with such fidelity as we may be able to exercise, but such is not the order of Christian development. Great ideas must first become incarnate in men and women who live among their fellows, before they can be readily adopted by others. The Church of Pentecost made the world its debtor by raising up in the course of a few years a body of notable men, some of whom surpassed the apostles themselves in breadth of view, clearness of vision, and equipment for service. In its membership it incarnated a type of piety, a measure of fraternal love, an exhibition of unity both in feeling and thought, such as the world has looked upon with wonder ever since, and so far surpassing any known standard of our modern times, that Christians too

generally assume that such ideals can no longer be realized in such a world as ours.

It is hardly necessary to remark that certain popular notions prevail in reference to Pentecost, and the Pentecostal era, which strikingly conflict with the statements above made. The miraculous manifestations which accompanied the gift of the Holy Spirit are freely acknowledged; but the early Christians are too often regarded as a body of earnest but simple-minded men who made serious mistakes, and whose attempt to found a society upon a purely ideal model met with signal failure. All such attempts are regarded by most persons as impracticable, especially in the midst of such a state of society as we find around us at the present day. The failure of various attempts of misguided men to found settlements on communistic principles, are cited as illustrations of the same kind of failure which attended a similar effort of the Christians after Pentecost. The plan adopted for helping the poor, large numbers of whom had been gathered into the early church, is also referred to as an illustration of misguided charity. At best, the story of those early days is regarded as a mere chapter in the general history of the Church. It is looked upon with interest solely because it is the opening

chapter of a great history, and not because of any intrinsic merit in the story itself. Such views of that brief but memorable era do very great injustice both to the first Christian converts and to the whole Christian Church. Nothing at all corresponding to the modern idea of communism ever existed in the Church of Pentecost, and it remains to be proved that the very praiseworthy assistance which was so freely given to the poor, actually proved a failure in any proper sense of the word.

Instead of regarding the Church of Pentecost as in any sense a failure, would it not be more in harmony with the spirit of the New Testament, and a great deal more in harmony with the actual facts in the case, to suppose that God graciously placed this noble church upon the threshold of Christian history, as the nearest approach to an ideal church which the world in the present dispensation could possibly see? May we not regard that church as an object lesson placed in full view before our eyes, to serve at once as a subject of careful study and of prayerful imitation? Should we not, in short, instead of looking back to this church as a bright spot in Christian history, ever receding farther and farther from us, place it in the foreground, and keep it constantly in view as the ideal church to which the

universal church of the present day is slowly tending, and toward which all earnest Christians should ardently press forward? I do not mean, of course, that all the details of its organization should be adopted in our day, or that mere matters of form or custom which were appropriate to an early age, should, or could, be introduced into Christian churches at the beginning of the twentieth century; but the spirit of Pentecost still survives, and the standard of spiritual life of that day is still maintained among multitudes of Christians in this world. Many questions which are agitating the public mind in our day were anticipated by the early Christians to an extent which very few suspect. The normal standard of Christian experience, the normal law of Christian beneficence, the normal organization of Christian society, the normal attitude of Christians toward what is called wealth, the normal measure of spiritual power in the Christian Church, and the normal variety and potency of spiritual gifts which Christians of all ages are entitled to expect: these and other kindred topics quickly suggest themselves to every Christian student who sits down to a careful study of the brief history of the Church of Pentecost, as recorded in the early chapters of the book of Acts.

The present is an era of extraordinary unrest,—unrest in the religious world, the political and social world, and the industrial world. Men everywhere are asking for new solutions of old problems, and especially for plain paths out of the great tangled jungle of difficulties in which individuals and nations alike are found struggling. As Christians we exhort all men everywhere to cry to God for guidance and help, but God does not respond by giving us a new code of moral and civil laws, or a new framework for society, or a new basis of industrial organization. This is not the Divine method. On the other hand He points to certain great unchanging principles, first clearly taught by our Saviour, and illustrated by being incarnated in his person and exhibited in his life. These principles are abiding as the everlasting hills, and meet the wants of all ages. They animated the Church of Pentecost, and made its brief history a picture of unfading beauty. Legislation can never reform or save society, but the spirit and example of Jesus Christ, incarnated in His living disciples, can reform legislation, make it the guide rather than the master of society, and, in the fulness of time, make the race so plastic in God's hands, that it can be fashioned according to his own infinite wisdom and righteous will.

During the past few years it has become quite common in some communities to apply the term "Pentecostal" to a phase of advanced personal experience, and also to a class of public meetings held for the promotion of personal holiness, spiritual power, and kindred graces which pertain to the higher walks of Christian discipleship. The term is by no means inappropriate when applied to the highest possibilities of the Christian life, and is much to be preferred to some other terms which have gained a wide currency; but for this very reason it becomes the more important that it be correctly understood. All Christian believers partake of Pentecostal blessings, but not many, it is to be feared, understand what the term implied in the days of Stephen, and Barnabas, and Philip, and the many others who, when the providential signal was given, went everywhere preaching the word. It would be well if those who preach and teach a Pentecostal standard of personal piety, would make a special study of the conditions which prevailed in the original Church of Pentecost. As happens in the case of every other religious term which comes into general use, this word of good omen seems to be becoming conventional, and may easily be made to mean much less than it did in the

hallowed days of the first believers at Jerusalem. If the following pages should, with God's blessing, contribute anything toward a better understanding of the character of the ancient Church of Pentecost, and a clearer realization of the privileges and responsibilities of the Christians who are nearing the threshold of the twentieth century, the writer will feel more than thankful that he has ventured to call attention to some of the lessons taught by the brief history of that ever illustrious church

Chapter II

THE CHARTER MEMBERS

II

THE CHARTER MEMBERS

"THE number of names together were about a hundred and twenty." This was a small, but no doubt a representative company. The names of only twenty-three of those present are known to us, but it would seem from the remarks of the people who heard them speaking in diverse tongues, that they were all, or nearly all, Galileans. A few choice spirits from other regions, like the family at Bethany, may have been present, but for the most part the company was probably made up of those who had sat long at the Master's feet in Galilee, and had followed him on his last sad journey to the scene of the world's greatest tragedy. Of all the thousands who openly espoused his cause, perhaps none were so well instructed, or had been so thoroughly tested, as those assembled in the upper room. They represented their absent brethren and sisters, and also the myriads of coming ages who were to believe on the Messiah through their word. They were "about" one hundred and twenty in number; that is, there were twelve apostles corresponding to the twelve tribes, with ten disciples allotted to each, the ten probably indicating the great

multitude of believers of the coming ages, which were represented by the little company present. They had journeyed with the Master from the first, had been carefully instructed, and after his resurrection had received a measure of special illumination which fitted them in a peculiar way for the stupendous event in which they were about to take an important part.

What was the spiritual status of those disciples? Were they Christians, in the sense in which we use the word Christian at the present time? Were they what evangelical Christians in our day call "converted" persons? Were they regenerated believers, in the sense in which the term regenerated is popularly employed? Very much depends on the answers given to these and similar questions, so far as the application of the lessons of Pentecost to Christians of the present dispensation is concerned, and we need to give earnest heed to all the hints which the New Testament gives us on the subject. We should also be careful to dismiss from our minds all modern phraseology and modern controversies, and try to follow the footsteps of the disciples as they were gradually prepared for their great initiation into the full privileges of accepted believers in the risen Son of God.

When Jesus selected his disciples in Galilee they were simply ordinary Jews, with Jewish ideas, and with no higher ideal of personal piety than that furnished by the Jewish standard as expressed in the most advanced portions of the Old Testament. How very low that standard was, but few Christians of the present day seem able to realize. Whether we view the subject from the standpoint of inner experience, or of outward conduct, a vast chasm separates between the "least" under the Christian dispensation, and the "greatest" under that of the Old Testament. From Moses to Malachi no Old Testament saint had ever heard of such a thing as loving an enemy, nor had the idea dawned upon any one's mind that there was, or could be, anything wrong in cherishing a burning desire for revenge when smarting under a sense of personal injury. The first elements of a Christian experience existed, no doubt, in the hearts of God's people in the most remote ages, but only in outline. The Sermon on the Mount put a new and deeper meaning into terms with which God's saints of all ages had been familiar, and from the proclamation by our Saviour of the Kingdom of God, new privileges were set before all God's people, and new responsibilities were laid upon them. It thenceforth became impossi-

ble to measure the Jewish saint and the Christian disciple by the same standard.

If it be said, as it often is said, that right is forever right, and wrong forever wrong, and that it is impossible to set up two standards of morals, adapted to different eras, it is sufficient to reply that any and every standard of moral conduct must in the nature of the case rise or sink downward in exact proportion to the light in which it is viewed. We need not go back twenty centuries for illustrations of this well established fact. John Newton in his youth thought he did God service in helping to transport slaves from Africa to America. Sir Matthew Hale believed that witches should be severely punished, and many God-fearing men have thought it right to persecute heretics. God has given light to the world as rapidly as the race has been prepared to receive it, and if it be true that the ancient Jewish standard of morals and religion was a very low one, we must also remember that it marked an amazing advance beyond that of any other people at that period of human history.

The first disciples were intelligent, honest, and apparently earnest, young men, who accepted the Jewish religion and Jewish Scriptures without question. They differed from the mass of their fellow

countrymen only in the fact that they accepted the proclamation of the Kingdom of God by their Master, and also accepted him as the long promised Messiah. Up to the morning of their Master's resurrection they had not advanced very far beyond hundreds of other devout Jews, and even after that startling event had taken place, and after many mysteries had been explained to them, they were still unable to divest their minds of the persistent idea that a material kingdom was to be set up in the miserable and wicked city of Jerusalem. A certain special measure of the Spirit had been given them; their "understanding" had been "opened," the Master had breathed upon them, and invoked the descent of the Spirit upon them, and precious lessons had been freely imparted to them; but to the last they only comprehended dimly the amazing events which had transpired, and which were daily transpiring before their eyes. They were as yet very far below the least of those who in the fulness of the present dispensation know Jesus Christ as a risen Saviour, know God as a reconciled Father, and bear in their hearts the witness of adoption, the hope of immortality, and those fruits of the Spirit which attest the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer's heart.

The word "converted," as popularly used to express that change of heart and conduct which marks the beginning of the Christian life, is not, strictly speaking, a scriptural term, and even in its more limited sense it has disappeared from the revised version. Its general use as indicative of the broad change which marks the beginning of a regenerate life, can no doubt be traced to the language of Peter, as found in the authorized version,—"Repent, therefore, and be converted, etc." But modern Christians have in this, as in other like cases, put a meaning into an old English word which originally did not belong to it. Peter simply exhorted his hearers to turn, to reverse their course in life, and pointed out to them how that by so doing they might attain to the marvellous change, and become partakers of the divine gifts which the Galileans had received.

What then was the exact position of the assembled company on the eve of Pentecost? Were they "converted," in the usual modern sense of the word? Manifestly not. Not one even of the apostles knew as much of the Spirit's work in the heart as a child of ten or twelve, living in the fulness of the present dispensation, can know, and does know, after finding Christ by the simple way of repentance and faith. Not one of them could

have expounded the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. Not even John could have given an intelligent commentary on our Saviour's discourse with Nicodemus. They had all seen the risen Christ, but to none of them had he yet become the "hope of glory." They had seen their lately crucified Master alive again, but to none of their inner souls had life and immortality been "brought to light." They were, in short, like recent sleepers roused from slumber in the early dawn, and waiting for a glorious sunrise.

But if these men were not what in our day are called "converted" persons, much less were they in the religious sense of the word merely adherents of the Jewish religion. They had crossed their Rubicon and had left Judaism behind them forever. They believed in Jesus as the long expected Messiah, and had accepted him as such. They had heard his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, and had yielded themselves up as members of this kingdom, however imperfectly they understood it. They had accepted the idea of a suffering Messiah, had become witnesses of the resurrection of their Master, and were now expectant believers, waiting for a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the exact nature of which they did not, and could not, understand. In short,

they were in a state of transition. They had turned away from the dead past, had been in a sense cast out by Judaism, but had not yet entered into the light and liberty of Christian believers. But they were *believers*, believers in Jesus Christ as a risen Saviour, and they were expectant believers. They were waiting for a manifestation which their Master had assured them would come at an early day. Their position was peculiar, and in one respect unlike that of any believers at the present day. Through all the long days of their expectant waiting, and up to nine o'clock of the last eventful morning, they were held back by the fact that the dispensation of the Spirit had not yet been inaugurated. "The Spirit had not yet been given." But, God be praised, that hindrance has now been removed forever, and from that glad morning down to the latest moment of time, the Holy Spirit has been, and forever shall be the present free gift of God to all believers.

The little company of expectant disciples who had gathered together on the ever memorable morning of Pentecost, was made up of representative men and women. They were representative persons in a double sense; they were worthy members of a large brotherhood of believers of like spirit who had avowed their adherence to

Jesus as the Messiah, and they were about to embrace the privilege, to be illustrated in their own persons, of the fulness of blessing which was to become the common heritage of uncounted myriads in the ages to come. They were about to step within the veil, to appear in the immediate presence of the throne, and to receive in their own persons the purifying and illuminating touch of the awful Shekinah which dwelt between the cherubim. For centuries to come earnest souls in all parts of the world were to look back eagerly to their morning of blessing, and long to share the privileges and receive the amazing measure of blessing which was to become theirs. The hundred and twenty disciples were not privileged above and beyond all their fellows; they only led the van, only were made the first participants in the fulness of blessing, which was to be offered to all believers throughout all coming ages.

These privileged disciples also fairly represented, no doubt, the large body of believers who had become the recognized followers of Jesus throughout Palestine. It is a mistake to assume, as some have done, that these were few in number; that vast numbers had proved unfaithful to their first profession of allegiance, and that the hundred and twenty who were found in the upper room were

about all that were left of the multitudes who had followed the Master along the highways of Galilee. After his resurrection Jesus appeared to many of his disciples, and on one occasion no less than five hundred persons were present, and became witnesses that he had truly risen from the dead. At an early period in his ministry he had been able to send out no less than seventy evangelists, who made extensive tours throughout the towns and villages, and met with astonishing success. A carefully organized band of preachers pushing the work of evangelization with the utmost zeal and vigour, and pursuing the pathway of uninterrupted success, must have gathered round them a large band of permanent disciples. We have no record of any defection so widespread and complete as to justify a supposition that all of these hundreds, and no doubt thousands, of accepted disciples had forsaken both the Master and his cause, and hence it may safely be assumed that the little company in Jerusalem had been selected as representatives of their brethren and sisters who were unable to leave their homes in the surrounding towns and villages.

Why, then, was the transcendent privilege of Pentecost limited to so few? Why were not the whole body of believing disciples gathered to-

gether in Jerusalem, or on Tabor, and an impressive pageant enacted worthy of the beginning of a new era, the inauguration of a new dispensation?

To such questions it is sufficient to reply that with the fading away of the dispensation of types and shadows, no place remained for such a spectacular display as human vanity would have craved. Simplicity became henceforth the law of divine procedure. Jacob's well had now become as sacred and as favoured a spot as the temple, and the gorgeous ritual of the Jewish priests must henceforth give place to the intelligent prayers, "uttered or unexpressed," of the child-like disciples of Him who had now become the High Priest of the human race. What was needed to mark such an event as the full inauguration of a new dispensation of such a character as this, was a manifestation which would be clear, intelligible, and impressive, to those who were able to receive spiritual lessons without any admixture of earthly grandeur, or worldly pomp and display. More than ever the kingdom of God was now to become a distinctive power in the world, animated by a different spirit, and governed by higher laws than those which the children of this world had recognized.

We know very little concerning the personal characteristics of the favoured hundred and twenty in the upper room. The most prominent among them were fishermen, but it does not follow that they were poor in the strict sense of that word; nor does it follow that they were all ignorant and illiterate peasants because the caste-bound *literati* of Jerusalem regarded them as unlearned and ignorant men. There are many false standards of culture and intelligence in the world of our own day. The Brahman priest despises the learning of the school-boy who has acquired more useful knowledge in a year than the priest has done in a lifetime, and the Moslem saint who can repeat every word of the Koran from memory, looks with contempt on the otherwise intelligent people around him who cannot even read a line of Arabic. The first disciples were probably persons of good brain power, of practical sense, of fair intelligence, and if not learned in the sense in which that term was understood among the literary pedants of Jerusalem, they were yet well informed, and were in closer touch with the hearts and minds of their fellow men than their narrow minded critics were. They probably represented very fairly the average manhood and womanhood of Galilee. They were not by any means rich, and probably were not in

the strict sense of the word poor. They enjoyed no recognition from the fashionable society of the day, but they were evidently on fairly equal terms with the masses among whom they moved. In short, their Master had, in selecting his pioneers, evidently adopted the policy which he still follows. The leaders in Christian work are for the most part still chosen from the ranks which represent the largest number of people.

It is sometimes said that the first Christians, although good and devoted men, had no one among them of sufficient culture and ability to formulate a new theology, or give the new religion a commanding position in the world, and that the cultured and accomplished Paul had to be raised up to meet this want. Hence we are reminded of similar conditions at the present day, and missionary managers are gravely told that simple men of the people can never make a deep or lasting impression upon such communities as are found in the great Asiatic mission fields; but such advisers forget that these very men did succeed in making a most extraordinary impression upon this very man of culture,—first rousing him to the highest pitch of hostile opposition, and then leading him in lamb-like submissiveness out into light and peace. Men of culture have their uses, but the

best culture is not always that which the world esteems as such. The first disciples were men of rarest culture in all the elements of noble manhood, and yet in the eyes of the temple hierarchy they were ignorant village peasants. The best manhood makes the best Christian, but the most learned and polished men are by no means always endowed with the best manhood. If we may estimate the worth of these disciples by what they accomplished, it will suffice to say that they nobly fulfilled their own mission, and at the same time speedily raised up men of like mind who proved not only equal but even superior to their leaders.

Chapter III

PENTECOST

III

PENTECOST

EVERY view of Pentecost is incomplete which does not connect it with the great work which our Saviour came to earth to accomplish. It was the concluding act in a series of great events, which, taken together, constituted the full consummation of his mission to our earth. When Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished," he could not have meant that the mighty task which he had undertaken was now completed; for death and the grave were yet to be despoiled, and the work of bringing a revolted world back to its allegiance to the King of Kings had not yet been fully inaugurated. His struggle with the legions of hell, the awful agony of lone contact with the powers of sin and death, his self-devotion to a life in the likeness of sinful men, and his agonizing death upon the cross; all these were now over, but the cry of the dying Sufferer only marked the close of the last scene in the awful tragedy which was taking place. Three days later, as the Prince of Life, he rose from the dead and asserted full authority over all realms of earth and heaven;

but this did not complete the mission on which he had come, nor even later when he ascended from Olivet, could it be said that he had at last finished his mission among men. Had no Pentecost followed the ascension, the story of Calvary and the resurrection would probably have long since been forgotten, or at best would have only found a place among the mysterious records of a remote era in which later generations could have felt little special interest.

We should never forget that Jesus came to earth as the Mediator of a new covenant. The old covenant which had constituted the foundation of the Jewish system, and which had been given through the meditation of Moses, had failed, and in the homely language of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, God had found fault with it. In its stead a new and everlasting covenant was to be established, and to accomplish this task Jesus, the Messiah of prophecy, had appeared among men, had proclaimed the terms of the covenant, had hallowed it with his own blood, had committed its proclamation into the hands of trusted disciples, and had ascended to a seat upon the joint throne of the universe, leaving behind him a promise that the covenant which he had established was to be made effective through the

immediate agency of the Holy Spirit. It is often, if not indeed, generally, assumed, that when Christ had finished his visible work on earth he withdrew from the scene, while God the Father poured out his Spirit upon the disciples, and inaugurated the great work for which Christ had come to prepare the way. Such, however, is not the exact teaching of Scripture. Jesus himself was the Lord of Pentecost. The work of that wonderful morning was his work, and formed a most important part of that task which he came to earth to accomplish. He had expressly promised that he would send the Spirit to them, and when Peter stood up to explain the astonishing phenomenon which had taken place to his Jewish hearers, he distinctly told them that Jesus, who had been exalted to a seat at the right hand of God, had shed forth that which they saw and heard. In other words, the outpouring of the Spirit on the morning of Pentecost was the final completion of the great work of human redemption. A way of reconciliation had been prepared and presented to the human race, and now this reconciliation was to be made, in the broadest and most far-reaching sense of the word, effectual and real.

When Moses dedicated, or ratified, the first covenant at Mount Sinai, we read that he led

seventy elders, who would appear to have been representatives of the people, up into the mount, and that an altar having been duly prepared and the prescribed offerings presented thereon, he took of the blood of the victims and sprinkled not only the altar, but the seventy elders and the "book of the covenant," and thus solemnly hallowed the people, and on their behalf accepted the terms of the covenant which God was making with them. The occasion was extraordinary in every way. The sacred mountain had just been the scene of the most awful manifestation of the divine presence which mortal eyes have ever beheld. While the great rocky range trembled on its base, Sinai itself was shrouded in thick darkness below, and crowned with a devouring flame upon its crest. Blackness and darkness and tempest added to the awful grandeur of the scene, while the sound of a trumpet louder than that of the archangel had summoned the people to listen to the proclamation of God's law. This law had now been proclaimed, the people had promised obedience, and Moses and the elders had gone up into the mount for the formal and solemn ratification of the covenant. There God met with them, giving them in vision an extraordinary manifestation of his presence, while cloud and flame again attested to the

people that they were in the divine presence, and that God was putting his seal upon his covenant with them. No wonder that for long centuries the picture of that awful scene was deeply impressed upon the minds of the Jewish people, giving them a vivid sense of the ineffable holiness and majesty of God, and teaching them what it was to tremble at his word. They received an impression, not soon to be effaced, of the awful sanctions which had been affixed to God's laws, and they were made to feel as deeply as persons of their grade of intelligence and moral development could feel, the solemn nature of the obligations which they assumed under the covenant which God was making with them, as individuals, and as a people. Over against this awe-inspiring display, we must now place the more simple, but much more expressive and "reasonable" manifestation which took place on the morning of Pentecost. The sacrifice upon Calvary had taken place, and our poor earth had been sprinkled with the precious blood of the Lamb of God which was to take away the sin of the world. A way of forgiveness had been found, a new legal code, marvellously condensed into the single word, love, had been proclaimed, and new privileges before unheard of, and up to that hour beyond the comprehension of

the race, had been graciously provided; new light had been thrown upon the future by drawing aside the veil, and giving men a clear glimpse of immortality, and now a new destiny was offered to the whole human race. In short, new possibilities appeared upon the horizon, and a new era was about to dawn upon humanity.

But all these great and gracious blessings were dependent upon something which had not yet appeared. The new covenant had been very clearly proclaimed and illustrated, but as yet it was without the living power which was absolutely necessary to make it effective. The most perfect covenant which could be made between God and men must forever fail if it is to consist of nothing more than a legal statement of privileges and obligations. The superiority of the new covenant over the old must depend, not on the terms in which it had been proclaimed, but on the power to make it effective, and here we see how necessary it was that Pentecost should be added to all that Christ had accomplished. It was the completion of his great work, and is as inseparable from his mission to earth as was the resurrection, or, indeed, we might almost say, his atoning death on Calvary. Without it, the great plan of salvation must, in the nature of the case, have been brought

to an abrupt close before it was fully inaugurated among men.

The morning of Pentecost witnessed what might not improperly be called the Advent of the Holy Spirit. If it be objected that the Eternal Spirit had been in the world from the beginning; that He appears on the very first page of revelation; that both in creation and in providence his agency had always been recognised, and that the saints of the Old Testament had known him as the source both of inspiration and spiritual power; it is sufficient to reply that Christ also, as the Eternal Son, had been in the world from the beginning; that in both creation and providence the Son had been the directing, as the Spirit had been the efficient agency through which all the mighty works of God had been carried forward. But while the Son had been in the world from the beginning, it was only on the morning of the Advent at Bethlehem that he appeared as the Son of Man, and the Incarnate Son of God. In like manner the Spirit had been in the world, and had been recognized among the servants of God in all ages; but in his full manifestation as the Paraclete, as the abiding Comforter who had come into the world to give potency to the various agencies which Jesus had provided, and to carry forward to

its full consummation the great work which he had inaugurated, the Spirit had not before been known among men. His coming had been foretold, and when it actually occurred it was as truly a divine advent as had been that of the Saviour whom he came to represent. His coming marked the opening of a new era,—the final closing of one dispensation, and the full opening and formal inauguration of another.

The present is sometimes called the dispensation of the Holy Spirit ; but this title can hardly be properly applied to our era. Ours is the Christian dispensation, and Christ is still our Lord and King. When the Spirit was promised, it was expressly stated that he would not speak by his own authority,—" He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak." In his office as Paraclete he represents Jesus Christ, takes up the work which Jesus laid down when he ascended on high, and carries forward, and will continue to carry forward, this work until it is fully and finally accomplished. The title Paraclete has received many definitions, and has been the subject of some little controversy, and it is possible that a perfectly satisfactory equivalent of the Greek term has not yet been found in our language. The word " Comforter " has many pre-

cious associations, and will probably hold its place in any and all English versions which may be made, but we do not often think of our Saviour as a comforter. Jesus, however, spoke of the Spirit as "another Paraclete,"—one like himself, one who is to take up his work and make it universal. Jesus was more than a Comforter to his own and to the race, and whatever title will best express what our Saviour was, and what he aimed permanently to do among men, is the word to employ when we attempt to express the meaning of the word Paraclete. It would perhaps have been well if the word had been left untranslated, but we cannot fail to be reminded when we use it, that the present office of this "other" Paraclete on earth is to do the work of the world's Saviour, and hence the present is, and must continue to be, the dispensation of grace and truth in Jesus Christ.

The abiding Paraclete entered upon his mission among men with a solemn promise,—with, indeed, a covenant obligation,—to remain among the disciples of Jesus as long as they remained on earth. Unlike the Incarnate Son, his was not to be a transient stay. The morning of Pentecost was not to be the brightest and best of all the mornings of earth, but rather the ushering-in of an era of abounding grace, an era, which was to abound

more and more in tokens of God's favour for long ages to come. The Christian believer should ever bear in mind that the Holy Spirit of Pentecost is in our world to-day, and is present in all the plenitude of power which attended his first coming upon the disciples at Jerusalem. Whatever may be said concerning the evil which is in the world, whether evil men are still waxing worse and worse, or whether the world is growing better, the promises of God remain unchanged. Believers still enjoy their full measure of privilege, and the Holy Spirit is still the Paraclete who abides in believing hearts, and makes effective the promises in which Christian disciples trust.

Too often we may hear earnest men and women praying for a repetition of Pentecost, as if they hardly realized that when the Spirit came, He came once for all. They seem to think that the first Pentecost was a kind of model prayer-meeting, and exhort one another to unite in earnest prayer, as did the first disciples, that the Spirit may be poured upon them as in the beginning. Without intending it, without, indeed, knowing it, they drift into the bewildering thought that Pentecost was only one of a long series of similar manifestations, to be repeated in myriad places, and through all generations to come. They thus

assume that all believers are expected to wait for the Spirit's baptism, as the disciples waited at Jerusalem. Many of the exhortations which we hear at prayer-meetings are based on this mistaken idea, and many immature disciples are led into doubt and darkness by trying to obey an exhortation to seek for the Paraclete whom they have long since found. It is one thing to accept a gracious promise and receive the Spirit, and quite another thing to seek for a special manifestation, or for special help.

When Sir Samuel Baker was making explorations in the region of the upper Nile, he chanced to pitch his tent one evening upon the sands of a dry bed of a large river. The heat was stifling, and the surrounding hills and valleys looked as if no drop of water had fallen for years. About midnight Sir Samuel was aroused from sleep by his Arab guard calling out in great alarm, "The river! the river!" He sprang from his cot, and hearing the rush and roar of an approaching flood, knew that the rains had suddenly burst upon the mountains, and that the dry sands would soon be swept by a rushing torrent. He had barely time to escape before the flood was upon him. Having gained a safe place on the bank of the stream, he again lay down to sleep, and when he awoke next

morning he found that the whole scene had been transformed. The birds were singing in the trees overhead, the people were rejoicing in their huts and fields, and a broad river twelve or fifteen feet deep was flowing quietly within its banks. The Arab peasants began at once to take advantage of the coming of the river, by opening channels along which the water might flow into their little fields. No one among them seemed distressed by the thought that the river might not stay. It had come for the whole season. They trusted the ordinary course of nature without a moment's hesitation. They rejoiced in the presence of the river, and yet each one knew that to make its waters available for his own little field, it would be necessary for him to open a channel in which the water might flow from the river to the field for which it was needed.

The prophet Ezekiel tells how he once saw in vision waters flowing from out the temple at Jerusalem, gradually increasing in volume, and carrying life and healing in their course as they turned towards one of the most blighted spots on earth. At the close of his wonderful visions on Patmos, the Apostle John saw in clearer outline this healing stream flowing, not as before from the temple, but from the throne of God and the Lamb.

The temple in Jerusalem had served its purpose, and now was superseded forever. Jerusalem the Golden had now become one vast Holy of Holies, while all believers had become priests unto God, and had gained immediate access to the Mercy Seat on high. The Saviour himself had taught the disciples that by the water of life was meant the Spirit of the living God, and thus the beloved disciple was favoured with a vision of the Eternal Spirit, under the symbol of the river of water of life, forever proceeding from the Father and from the Son, and carrying healing in its course to all the blighted nations of earth.

Pentecost did for all believers what the midnight flood did for Sir Samuel Baker ; it ushered the coming of the river of the water of life which was to flow till the end of time. All believers become heirs to this life-giving Spirit, and all should think of him, and speak of him, as a living Presence in this world, pledged to remain among God's people forever more.

The believer, however, may still pray for the gift of the Spirit, but he does so as the peasant opened the way for the rill of water which was to connect his little garden with the brimful river from the mountains. We may pray for a Pentecostal blessing without denying the imme-

diate presence of the Pentecostal Spirit. We have not been enjoined to wait, perhaps for days, but are assured that the water of life flows evermore in full view of the eye of faith. We may seek for special manifestations of the Holy One in times of special need, as, for instance, when commissioned to perform special service, or to endure peculiar trials. In all this, however, we are only availing ourselves of the ever-present help of the Spirit, and not practically forgetting that the outpouring of Pentecost ever occurred.

No Christian believer should be misled so far as to limit the possibilities of divine grace under the present dispensation, under any possible circumstances. If there is any difference between the position of the latter-day believer and the first members of the Church of Pentecost, it is all in favour of the modern Christian, rather than of the primitive believers. Those of us who live in the closing years of the nineteenth century have all the promises which they had received, and in addition enjoy many other exceeding great and precious promises of which they had never heard. We have equal access to the same Mercy Seat, we trust in the same Saviour, we receive the gracious help of the same Holy Spirit, and in addition to all this we have the examples of multi-

tudes of believers, the encouragement which comes to us from considering God's dealings with our fathers and with the saints of old, the accumulated experience of hosts of Christian disciples, many of whom have been peers of the holy men and women of old in all the essentials of holy manhood and womanhood; and so far from assuming for a moment that we can only stand afar off and partake in limited measure of the gifts of God's abounding grace, we should remember that it is our privilege to live as near God as any people in any age have ever done. We should excuse ourselves from no obligation, however startling it may be, on the ground that Pentecost means less to us than it did to the disciples in the upper room long ages ago.

That intangible and mysterious something which we call electricity has been in our world in full measure since the birth of time, but it means vastly more to us of the present generation than it did to our ancestors of past centuries, or even our fathers of the first half of the present century. Dr. Franklin tapped the clouds and drew the electric spark down to earth, and by so doing made the unknown power mean more to the race than it had ever done before. Professor Morse erected his wire and taught the world how the electric current

could be made to write at a place a thousand miles away, and the world drew nearer and began to surmise that other and greater possibilities lay concealed in the subtle agency which could work so great a wonder. Then as time passed Edison and others appeared and began to make this invisible power speak for them, and laying hands upon the blinding lightning they made it illuminate streets and homes, and finally yoked it to trains of heavy cars, where it is now quietly doing the bidding of frail mortals with an obedience that never fails. No wonder that now, when Tesla appears upon the scene and proposes still more wonderful feats, people are prepared to believe almost anything possible which he may promise. And yet the store of electricity is just the same that it was when the Red Indians roamed over America and the cave dwellers struggled for a wretched existence among the forests of Europe. In fullest measure it has been present through all the ages past; but it is a greater power among men to-day than ever before, because the men of to-day profit by the achievements of their predecessors, and know how to utilize the amazing properties of an omnipresent natural power which shows a wonderful capacity for becoming man's servant.

It is thus, too, with Pentecost. The Holy Spirit in full measure has been in our world, and within call of every believer, since the first morning of the era, but only here and there has the Christian Franklin or the Christian Edison appeared to demonstrate the possibilities which are offered to all, but which the mass of believers seem strangely reluctant to put to the test. When, however, a courageous and devoted student of spiritual dynamics accepts God's promise in its fulness, carefully observes all required conditions, and startles those around him by demonstrating the fact that Pentecost is ours, and is as much to us as it was to the hundred and twenty at noon of the day on which the cloven tongues of flame appeared, a profound impression is made, and multitudes draw near and learn how to seek and find the same blessing. It was thus with John Wesley. He read of the Spirit, heard the testimony of others, sought, believed, and at last found his heart "strangely warmed." A million others might have done so before him, but it was left for him to lead the way. When he began to testify that his heart had become a living temple of God's Holy Spirit, a new power attended his word. Thousands and tens of thousands were able to realize that the River of Water of Life was no longer a vision to

be gazed upon in the distant skies, but a living and healing stream flowing through the waste places of earth, and within easy reach of every thirsting soul. The Holy Spirit is not in the world in any fuller measure now than when Mr. Wesley first began to proclaim his testimony; but millions of believing Christians are nearer to God and nearer to the realization of the Pentecostal day than they would have been if Mr. Wesley had never lived. As with Mr. Wesley, so it has been in greater or less measure with thousands of others, through whom God, the Father, and Christ, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the hallowed Paraclete, seem to have been brought nearer to men, and to be more within call of the human race, than they were five hundred or a thousand years ago.

During my first year in India, while living among the lower Himalayas, I chanced when out for an evening walk to see a beautiful scarlet-coloured flower upon a low branch of a large tree which overhung my pathway. I had never seen the Himalayan rhododendron before, and of course did not recognize this flower. I pulled down the branch and admired the beauty of the flower, but did not inspect it closely. A week later, when walking along the same path, my attention was

again called to the same flower. I caught the branch and pulled it down near me, but was surprised to see that the flower had doubled its size. I had not noticed on the first occasion that it was really only half open, and now instead of seeing one scarlet flower I found that more than a dozen bell-shaped flowers had been concealed in its bosom, and the whole presented a wonderful mass of glowing beauty. It has often seemed to me since that day, when thinking of God's rich and full provision for his spiritual children, that Pentecost was like that unfolding flower. It has held, and still holds in its bosom, rich stores of blessing far beyond anything which the most advanced believers have yet been able to appropriate. The Church of Jesus Christ has yet to prove the power of that grace which is equal to the uttermost demands of our universal humanity. God has for ages been challenging his saints to prove him, and put his promises to the test, and He holds in store an infinite reserve of spiritual resources which a million worlds could never lessen. But where are the Christian Franklins and Edisons, who with holy daring will lead the way in demonstrating the transcendent privileges, the boundless possibilities, which lie within easy reach of those who realize the full meaning of the Pentecostal dispensation?

The demand of the hour is for a spiritual race of men and women who dare to attempt great things and to expect great things. Pioneers in faith are needed quite as much, and even more, than in science, or mechanical invention, or any other department of human activity. May God speedily raise up and thrust forward a race of men and women who shall be able to appreciate the glorious era in which we are privileged to live.

Chapter IV

THE MIGHTY BAPTISM

THE MIGHTY

IV

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"I indeed baptize you with water; but ONE mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Luke iii. 16.

"Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John i. 33.

"Wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Acts i. 4. 5.

The disciples who waited at Jerusalem for the fulfillment of their Master's promise must have thought much, and talked much, of the probable character of the great event which they knew to be near at hand. The intimations given them had not been very clear,—no doubt for the reason that they could not have understood a more definite account of a manifestation which was to be in all its permanent elements wholly spiritual. They had heard of a power with which they were to be clothed, and they had also been taught many things concerning the offices of the Paraclete when he should come; but it is probable that the idea which would take clearest hold upon their minds

was that of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. They had become perfectly familiar with the baptism of water, had witnessed it almost daily, and knew its import. They had heard also of the baptism of fire, but no doubt understood that whatever outward form this might assume, it was only to be a symbol of the real baptism, the abiding impartation of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the distinctive feature of the great event which awaited them was to be the baptism of believing disciples with the Holy Spirit, and when the event occurred, this expectation was fully realized. The baptism of the Spirit became the chief feature of the Pentecostal manifestation, and will continue to be its chief feature until the close of the present dispensation.

In view of this striking fact, in view of the explicit predictions of the event, and the still more explicit nature of the manifestation when it first occurred, it is a marvel how far most modern Christians have failed to grasp the spiritual meaning of the plain lessons which the mighty baptism of Pentecost set before the Christian church. We hear much on the general subject of baptism. Volume after volume has been written concerning it, but nearly always in a controversial spirit. Theory after theory has been advanced, and the

most opposite extremes have been advocated; but where a hundred books have been written on questions of mode, or its ceremonial import, hardly one has been written on the real essence of the whole question, the true meaning of the words, "baptized with the Holy Spirit." One affirms that the baptism of water unites us to the church, and, in consequence, to Christ of whom the church is the body. Another affirms that baptism is the door of admission to the church; a third regards it as a seal to a covenant; a fourth maintains that it is an outward sign of an inward grace; a fifth teaches that it is a condition of forgiveness, while a dozen rise up at once to contend with intense religious earnestness that this, that, or the other particular mode of baptism is the only scriptural and proper one to adopt. I do not say that all these are wrong, or that all questions of mode are unimportant; but it does seem amazing that the shadow should seem to be accounted as everything, and the substance as almost nothing. Even those who look a little deeper, and grasp the idea of a rich spiritual grace imparted by the Holy Spirit to the believer, often seem strangely prone to limit the extent of the work, and speak of a baptism of power, or of purity, or of love, or of some other gift or grace, in language which,

however well understood by some, is apt to mislead immature disciples by giving them narrow views of that which is as broad as the utmost limits of the soul's wants. To add to the misconceptions under which many labour, the term baptism is often used figuratively, and sometimes in very absurd connections, as, for instance, when the wretched Louis Napoleon, on the eve of his fall, spoke of his hapless son's presence on a battle field, as his "first baptism of fire." In like manner we often hear of baptisms of sorrow, or of affliction, or of any other phase of ill fortune, and while it is very true that the use of these metaphors is harmless enough, yet the loose application of such terms very naturally adds to the misunderstanding of the original term which has so long and so generally prevailed.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is that divine act by which the bond which is to unite the disciple to his Master becomes real. It is not merely an initiation into a visible organization, or into an ideal relationship, but an actual and vital union between the Master and the disciple. When Jesus said, "I am the vine; ye are the branches," he did more than give expression to a mere metaphor. He uttered an amazing truth, a truth on which depends all that is vital, and all that is

divine in the Church of Christ to-day and forevermore. The disciple when first called to become a follower of Christ, is serving self, is following his own way, and seeking his own ends. He is required to deny himself, that is, to repudiate himself, to consent to give up his very name and assume that of the Master. He is next required to take up his cross, to make the cross of the Master his own, and to reckon himself as one who has died in the person of him whose name he bears. When he thus yields himself up, when he sees himself in the person of his Saviour on the cross, the Spirit descends upon him, the death of the Substitute upon the cross which he has by an act of faith made his own becomes in a very blessed sense his own indeed, while in a moment new life enters his soul, new light shines into his heart, and a new realm expands before his gladdened vision. He is a new creature. A new world glows around him; a new impulse throbs within him. This mighty change dates from his intelligent perception of his relation to the dying Messiah. Hence we read,—"Know ye not that as many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the

Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The disciple who receives the baptism of the Spirit experiences a double change; he dies, and is made alive again. As a condemned sinner he no longer lives. His condemnation is taken away, and at the same moment a new character corresponding to his new name and new relation to God, is given to him. Hence we read, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." [R.V.] Union with Christ implies a change both of relation and of character. We are conformed to the moral image of him whose name we bear, and this conformity becomes so real that we are said to be robed in his very person. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." It follows, also, from the very nature of the case, that the great body of believers, wherever scattered throughout the world, must bear, in all its essential features, the same character, and be united by a divine tie into one great brotherhood. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free."

The substitutional death and actual resurrection of Jesus Christ thus become demonstrated facts, facts which are illustrated and demonstrated in the lives of living men and women as no other facts

in history have been or can be. The subject of the atonement is, and in the nature of the case must ever be, more or less shrouded in mystery. It includes factors which transcend the grasp of the human mind, and when any theologian assumes that he has fully mastered the subject, that he has fathomed a fathomless sea, no better evidence is needed to show that he does not quite understand what he is saying. But it is otherwise with demonstrated facts. *If* Christ represented a race of sinners on the cross, *if* he died in the name of each and all, *if* he rose from the dead in the name of each and all, and *if* a new life is offered to every one who apprehends these facts, and by a free choice accepts what has been thus won for him, then we should expect to see some amazing transformations in this gross, material age, which confirm and illustrate the facts. We are entitled to expect the appearance among us of startling moral miracles. Wicked, gross, selfish, and sensual men will be seen to undergo a transformation as complete as if they had suddenly died, and the next moment reappeared with a new character, as in fact new men, each possessing, in outline at least, the "mind," or character, which our Saviour possessed when here on earth. In other words, we are entitled to expect the reappearance of the Christ-

life on earth,—Christ living in the person of his disciples, and the works of Christ being repeated by those who inherit the promise that they shall do greater things than would be accomplished by the repetition of the old time miracles. The baptism of Pentecost meant all this to the hundred and twenty, and the same baptism should be expected to produce the same effect in this and every other age.

If it be said that moral transformations of this kind, even though very striking in some cases, are often very defective in outline, and feeble in manifestation, it is sufficient to reply that the reality of a manifestation does not depend upon its absolute perfection. A rainbow on an evening cloud may be very dim, but so long as its seven colours are present and blended in their proper order, it is a rainbow, and is recognized as such. With a wider and darker background of cloud, and with a full orbed sun shining in the west, the dim and dwarfed picture in the east expands into a magnificent spectacle of beauty, but it is still only a rainbow. So also with the disciple of Christ. He may be at best a man of somewhat feeble character; his faith may not be strong, or very intelligent; his purpose to follow his Master may not as yet be firmly grounded, and as a

necessary consequence his spiritual life may not be attended by a clear manifestation which at once arrests the attention of observers. And yet the elements of the Christ-life may all be there. In the spiritual realm, as in the natural, there is a law of growth, and this growth very often starts from very small beginnings. An invariable condition of this growth is a definite faith, based upon a clear apprehension of the believer's relation to Christ as his Saviour, and made possible by an unreserved submission to God. This faith will be found to vary in different individuals, according to the measure of enlightenment possessed by each, and hence the change which takes place at the outset is much more distinctly marked in some cases than in others, and the subsequent development of the new character will be correspondingly rapid or slow.

It should never be forgotten that the condition, "according to your faith," is one which applies to the whole wide realm of the believer's being. It is often supposed that when our Saviour used these words he referred only to the possibility of working miracles, or to extraordinary emergencies in the believer's life, but this is by no means the case. In every special contingency, as well as in its application to the general course of life, the law

of faith works uniformly. "According to your faith" is the condition on which depends the measure of light, or love, or peace, or joy, or power, which each disciple is entitled to expect. The manifestation of the Christ-life forms no exception to this general rule. The measure of the manifestation depends upon the measure of the believer's faith. The setting sun glows in all his splendour in the western sky, but a full-arched rainbow on the eastern clouds depends on conditions which may or may not be present. An obscuring mist, a rift in the cloud, a diminishing rainfall, or other defects may lessen the beauty and perfection of the bow, but the sun is there in his strength, and the bow is there in reality, and with exactly the measure of perfectness which the conditions make possible. In like manner a feeble believer may be a partaker of the Christ-life, may actually know the love of Christ, and may have tasted in his measure the powers of the world to come, and yet the conditions of his imperfect discipleship are such that persons who themselves know little or nothing of spiritual things are easily led to doubt the presence of any divine element in his heart. Man is ever ready to doubt his fellow man, but happily there is one who does not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax.

A good man can readily detect goodness in others, but a bad man, or one who is thoroughly worldly, and who is accustomed to estimate character by worldly standards, will be very prone to depreciate what is good, especially in a spiritually minded Christian. The disciple is not above his Master, and when we remember that most of the cultivated classes in our Saviour's day were unable to see any goodness in his character, we need not wonder that so many in our own time cannot be persuaded that there are living men and women around us who bear the moral image of Jesus Christ. The world's ideal of what Christ was when among men on earth, is as far removed from the real life of Jesus in Galilee, as is its ideal of what a follower of Jesus ought to be in these closing days of the nineteenth century in England or America. It will not do to concede too much to those who profess to look in vain for living representations of Jesus Christ. Some of these disappointed searchers after truth may be good and true men, but in most cases it will be found that the difficulty lies in the character of those who search, and not in that of those whose claim to discipleship is challenged. The spiritual attracts the spiritual, and the material the material. The Christ-like will discover the outlines of the mind of Christ in hearts

and lives in which the worldly will fail to find any trace of such a spirit.

But while conceding that the vast majority of modern Christians exhibit the mind of Christ in very imperfect measure, it must not for a moment be supposed that there are no men and women in our day who fairly represent what the Christ-life really is, and how it is illustrated in every day life. The risen Saviour of sinners has not left himself without faithful and worthy witnesses on earth. We may find them all over the Christian world, and if not always appreciated at their full value, it is because they belong to the number of those of whom the world is not worthy. They are without guile, and live as pilgrims and strangers on earth while journeying to a better country. They live for their fellowmen. They count neither ease nor life as dear to them, if only they can do the will of the Heavenly Father, and finish the work which he gives them to do. They are gentle and tender in their affections, and yet strong and brave in every righteous cause. They love their fellowmen, befriend the friendless, seek the erring, receive the outcast, go freely among publicans and sinners, and so live and labour that the life of each is one long benediction to the Church and the world.

It is more than probable that many of those who read these lines will feel a certain kind of disappointment that more prominence is not given to the Pentecostal blessings which they sincerely crave, and which they have learned to associate with every thought of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The proneness of the poor, frail human heart to look away from God is in nothing more strikingly illustrated than in the unconscious desire so often felt to care more for "blessings" than the Blesser. The gift of power is sought by many as if it would in itself compensate for all losses and supply all needs. Others read of the rich bestowment of spiritual gifts at Pentecost, and earnestly covet the best of these gifts, be they what they may. Others, again, aspire to a hallowed experience, to a perfected holiness, to a fulness, of joy, or an abiding peace, or, in short, to a full measure of the Christian graces. But whether it be a rich measure of gifts, or a full measure of grace, all seem prone to forget that Christ, the living, loving, present Christ, is worth more than all possible gifts, and is inseparable from the lowest measure of possible grace. To be united to him, and to abide in him, should be the highest aim and fondest desire of every believing heart, and it is only by this abiding union with him that we can

hope either to attain or retain, the gifts and grace of the Pentecostal morning.

The baptism of Jesus by John had a depth of meaning which has been too much overlooked. Jesus could not have been baptized "unto repentance." The sinless cannot repent. His baptism, like his mission and death, was unique. It was in a hallowed sense his Pentecost. At the close of the ceremony he looked up and saw heaven open above him, and the Spirit descending in the form of a dove to abide upon him. John also saw the same descent of the Heavenly Dove, and bore witness to the event. The Master, like the disciples, was baptized with the Holy Spirit, and immediately entered upon his great mission, first by vanquishing the powers of hell in his long struggle in the desert, and next by going forth to proclaim his message to men. As we are baptized into Christ, and united to him, and made to represent him among men, so our blessed Master was baptized into our humanity, inducted into his office as the representative of the race, clothed with power, and with all other needed divine gifts for the amazing mission which he was to execute among men. By our Pentecost we become united to Christ, become sons of God and heirs to all which our Elder Brother has won in our name.

By our Saviour Christ's Pentecost he became heir to the title, the Son of Man, and by this title he usually spoke of himself after his baptism.

We thus see that as joint heirs with Jesus Christ we may claim in our measure the same Spirit which came upon our Master at Jordan. Such a baptism of the Holy Spirit transcends all gifts, and more than supplies all grace. It puts mortal man in touch with heaven; it brings him into immediate relationship with the Son of God; it robes him with the power which his Master possessed, and provides for the full supply of every want of his soul. He gains free access to a storehouse filled with treasures, equal both in measure and variety to all the demands of the human race. Surely it ought to be enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and for the servant to be as his Lord. The measure of power and blessing which sufficed for Jesus at Jordan, was abundantly sufficient for the hundred and twenty at Pentecost, and will meet all our wants in these closing days of our eventful century.

Chapter V

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

V

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

IN the preceding chapter attention has been called to the fact that the measure in which the Spirit is imparted to believers when they first receive Christ, is in exact proportion to the completeness of the submission and faith of the individual, and this, under the ordinary conditions which prevail in the world, may be expected to vary widely. If it was otherwise in the case of the disciples at Pentecost, it must be remembered that they were exceptional persons. Their instruction had extended over a term of several years, and their preparation for this eventful hour had been remarkable in every respect. They were all "filled" with the Holy Spirit. This homely phrase is very expressive and very accurate. The little twig is filled with the vital elements which flow to it from the vine. The mysterious something which we call life, the equally mysterious something which we call nature, that which determines the quality of the fruit and leaf, and the nourishment which provides for growth, all these are present in normal activity

up to the full measure of the twig's capacity to receive them. The normal union of the believer with his Saviour Christ is one which implies a similar fullness. It is permanent, and not fitful. It illustrates our Saviour's teaching on the possibility and blessedness of abiding in Him. The believer who is filled with the Spirit is made to partake of the gifts and graces which belong to his Master, and in his measure may be expected to illustrate these in his life. He may fall very far below his Master in the degree in which he exhibits this endowment, but in his measure, that is, up to the measure of his mental and spiritual capacity, his life will be a reproduction, rather than an imitation, of the Divine Life which was once lived among the hills of Galilee.

We should not overlook the fact that there is a normal fullness of the Spirit such as every Christian should aim to realize in daily life, and an abnormal, or special, gift for special purposes, and on special occasions. For instance, when Peter and John returned to the Christian assembly after their first arrest, and reported the threatenings of the rulers, the whole company joined in exultant song and prayer, and "were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Of Stephen it was said at the time of his appointment as deacon that he

was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and yet when confronting his enemies just before his death, he was in a special sense filled with the Spirit. A similar manifestation was given to Paul when about to pronounce sentence upon Elymas, and the early Christians seem to have been quite familiar with experiences of this kind.

On the other hand it is equally clear that the fullness of the Spirit was not a spasmodic or intermittent manifestation, partaking more or less of a miraculous character, but an abiding grace, the privilege of all believers, and the normal standard of personal holiness to which all believers were urged to attain. They were exhorted and commanded to "walk in the Spirit" and to be "filled with the Spirit." The Christian life was spoken of as living "in the Spirit," and good men like Barnabas and Stephen were widely known as men filled with the Holy Spirit. This was evidently the normal standard of Christian discipleship in the Church of Pentecost, and no teacher during the early days of Christianity ever dreamed of setting up a lower standard. No doubt newly received converts could have been pointed out who for a brief season maintained the character of expectant believers without having received the baptism of the Spirit. This seems

to have been the position of the three thousand on the evening of Pentecost. They had gladly received the word of promise, and had believed; but we find no mention of the descent of the Spirit upon any of them. The record, however, shows that they speedily took their place in the infant church in perfect unity with the body of united believers, and we cannot doubt that the Holy Spirit had in the meantime done for them, and in them, the same amazing work which had been wrought in the case of the hundred and twenty.

It is important that we should clearly distinguish between the normal and the special anointing of the Spirit. Very often Christians, especially young believers, are perplexed and confused by exhortations to pray for the Holy Spirit, and to seek what is too often vaguely called the baptism of the Holy Ghost. On the one hand some who have received the indwelling Spirit are led to doubt, if not often deny, the presence of this divine gift, while on the other hand, others too readily assume that, having received the Spirit once for all, and having known him as the abiding Paraclete, it is needless, if not indeed improper, to ask again for a gift already received. The mistake here is found in not distinguishing between the

mere presence of the Spirit and the special work which he is pledged to perform. He dwells in the believer's heart, illuminating, regenerating, purifying, and witnessing; but when special help is needed, when some special task is to be performed, or some special trial endured, a special anointing of the Spirit may be needed, and his special aid may be invoked by faith and prayer. In seeking such help the supplicant should not fail to recognize the presence of the Holy one as well as the gracious work which he is daily and hourly performing in the heart; but while praising God for this abiding gift, a special manifestation may be sought, and, indeed, at times must be sought, in order to prepare for the emergencies which often arise in Christian service.

The sameness of, and yet the distinction between, the normal and special manifestation of the Spirit has been strikingly illustrated by reference to a familiar experiment. The human body when in a state of health is charged in normal measure with what we popularly call the electric fluid. A person in a normal state of health and under normal conditions may be said to be filled with this mysterious fluid or energy; that is, the full demand of the physical being is supplied up to the measure of its capacity. If now the person is

insulated; that is, seated in a chair which stands in four glass tumblers, and if after lifting his feet from the floor he grasps two handles of a small electric battery, the invisible and mysterious fluid which we call electricity will begin to flow into his body, although he himself may not be conscious of any change taking place. His body was filled in a normal measure before, but now it is so surcharged with the invisible power that when any one holds out a hand near to him, brilliant sparks like tiny flashes of lightning are emitted from his person. It is thus with the living Fire, the "Spirit of burning" which God sends upon believers. The consecrated and trusting disciple may receive the Spirit in full measure for the ordinary and normal duties of life, but emergencies are sure to arise from time to time in the life of every believer and of every church, when a special anointing of power is needed,—times when an exceeding "weight of glory," or a wonderful anointing of power, may descend upon the disciple or the church, giving strength for duty or trial or, if need be, for suffering.

Many illustrations of this somewhat familiar fact will possibly occur to the mind of the reader. A preacher goes into his pulpit, perhaps careworn in mind and heavy in heart. He lifts his heart to

God in believing prayer, but enters upon his duties without receiving any special help. He is enjoying conscious communion with the Spirit of God, has no sense of condemnation, and yet finds his task a heavy one. He may be in the midst of his opening prayer, or it may be when he has entered upon the exposition of the portion of Scripture which he has chosen for the service; when suddenly the power of the Spirit descends upon him. His heart seems to expand and glow with new love and new confidence, while a tongue of fire seems to be given him with which to proclaim with new power the message which God puts upon his lips, or to the petitions which the Spirit helps him to send up to the mercy-seat. To give another illustration, I may cite the case of a disciple who on repeated occasions when entirely alone received very unusual manifestations of the Spirit's presence and power. These were unsought and unexpected, and the full meaning of the visitation was not understood beyond an impression which always accompanied the manifestation that a very sore trial was near at hand, and that Christ in tender love and compassion was strengthening his disciple to assume a heavy burden and endure a grievous trial. In due time the trial came, but the disciple was found prepared for the blow and

enabled to test and prove anew the sufficiency of divine grace. The modern revival, at least in its best phases, is a familiar illustration of this special outpouring of the Spirit. Sometimes a scene may be witnessed which reminds us of the original Pentecost. Believers are filled with holy joy, or it may be with holy awe, while unbelievers are pricked to the heart and filled with intense concern for their personal salvation. It is in such signs that we find the redeeming element in the modern revival, and if artificial methods and superficial impressions could be exchanged for a simple and devout trust in the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit, a new era,—a revival of the scriptural revival,—might soon dawn upon us, and perhaps at no distant day transform the universal Church of Christ.

It is very probable that the reader, or at least some readers, will be ready to ask what place is to be assigned to that large class, the immense majority of Christian believers, whose spiritual life is manifestly and confessedly very far below the normal standard as stated above. Are they, too, "in Christ?" Are they united to him by a living bond? And have they been baptized into him by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit?

Beyond all doubt every believer who has re-

ceived the witness of the Spirit to his adoption as a child of God, is united to Christ and draws whatever measure of spiritual life he enjoys from the True Vine. The fact that the life of the modern church seems feeble in comparison with that of Pentecost, only illustrates the startling fact that the average Christian of the present day does not understand the richness of his inheritance in Christ Jesus, but it by no means illustrates the permanent condition on which spiritual life is given and by which it is maintained. The Church of Pentecost differed from a modern church in the fact that the prevailing type of faith, devotion, and spiritual life was "full;" that is, normal, while in our day the prevailing type is imperfect and the normal Christian life exceptional; but the imperfect measure of life in the heart of feeble believers must not be despised, much less denied. It is implanted in the heart by God himself, and is precious in the sight of Him who never breaks a bruised reed nor quenches the smoking flax.

To refer again to the beautiful and very expressive figure of the union of the branches to the vine, a very striking illustration of the manner in which a believer with defective knowledge and feeble faith can yet be united to Christ, is found

in the familiar practice of grafting. The workman takes a small twig which has been sent to him from a distance, and finds that its buds are shrunken, its bark withered, and its vitality so nearly destroyed that it is only when he cuts beneath the bark that any trace of life or the possibility of life can be discovered. He does not despair for the twig, however; for he has faith in the operation of the laws and vital forces of nature. An incision is made in the branch of a living tree, the twig is inserted and carefully protected with grafting-wax, and at once the law of life begins to assert itself. In a few days the little twig begins to show signs of change, the buds begin to swell, the shrunken bark slowly expands, and often at the end of two or three weeks the green leaves begin to adorn the little twig, which so recently seemed almost destitute of life. I have myself seen such twigs burst into bloom in less than four weeks from the time that the law of life began to assert itself by virtue of their union with the living tree.

What death is to the twig sin is to the soul. The withered and shrunken appearance of the little twig was simply the evidence of death, partly operative and in full measure impending. When we speak of sin in the heart the real

meaning of the expression is that the law of spiritual death is in greater or less measure operative. The outward act of sin is a symptom of the startling fact that spiritual death has already become an active principle in the soul; but as the simple law of life in the living tree when operative utterly expels the active law of death in the little twig and fills it with life, so the Spirit of God by taking full possession of the believing heart expels the evil principle to which we may apply the terms sin and death interchangeably, and the whole moral being becomes subject to the law of life. In other words, to express the same thought in scriptural language, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.

Inseparable from this fullness of life both the graces and the gifts which adorn and enrich the Christian character are found in full or normal measure. The believer who is a partaker of the life of Christ is abundantly endowed with the fruits of the Spirit, such as faith, hope, love, peace, joy, gentleness, meekness, goodness, long-suffering, kindness, mercifulness, etc., and is also clothed with special gifts to qualify him for effective service in the Master's vineyard. These manifestations of the Spirit will be discussed in later chapters, and

for the present it may suffice to remark that while all believers are made partakers of these according to the measure of faith of each individual, yet the normal standard in the case of every believer is that of fullness.

The fullness of blessing, or that state of grace which was known in the Church of Pentecost as being filled with the Holy Spirit, has been recognized in some form by earnest Christians in every age, except during periods of almost universal spiritual decline and darkness. In speaking of this phase of personal experience many terms have been employed, some of them scriptural, and some otherwise. Many volumes have been written and many theories formed, but it has seldom happened that the unanimity of thought and feeling which was so conspicuous in the Church of Pentecost, has been illustrated in the teachings of those who have been leaders in movements connected with this most important subject. On the contrary it has too often happened that good men have differed on questions of secondary importance, while controversy has usurped the place of teaching, and the impression has thus been widely made that the general subject is one which cannot be discussed without peril to the Church. But is this, can this be, a correct view to take of such a subject?

Among the many terms employed to describe this fullness of blessing, we find such as the following : "Perfect Love," "Pure Love," "Christian Perfection," "Full Salvation," the "Rest of Faith," the "Higher Christian Life," the "Blessing of Holiness," "Perfect Holiness," "Entire Sanctification," "Full Assurance," and other like phrases. Concerning all of these phrases it may be remarked that while some of them are scriptural, all were unknown in the Church of Pentecost. The best Christian experience of which we have any record had been taught, received, and illustrated in life, before any of these terms came into use. May it not be possible,—is it not indeed probable, that the safest and surest way to realize again the life and power of the Church of Pentecost, would be to return to the simple conditions, and adopt the simple standards, which were recognized at the beginning ?

It may be well to state explicitly that modern terms are not necessarily bad in themselves ; nor is it needful to discuss any of the phrases given above. It must also be conceded that modern teaching, based upon such terms as those referred to, often leads to very satisfactory results. For instance, the duty and privilege of leading a holy life, the possibility of having one's heart cleansed

from all taint of sin, the obligation to live a life of complete consecration to God : these and kindred obligations or privileges may be, and often are, so presented to the mind of a believer as to lead to compliance with all the conditions necessary to the realization of such an experience as was the rule in the Church of Pentecost. God in His infinite tenderness is ever willing to bless any and every means which may be employed by sincere believers who are seeking a proper end, and hence it is well known that very imperfect teaching often is so blessed of God as to bring forth fruit to perfection. This and much more may be conceded, and yet the fact remains that while one or more ways may be good in themselves, there may still remain a more excellent way, in the following of which better results are attained and various dangers avoided. If we seek for good fruit, the best course to pursue is to seek for the tree which bears the fruit. It is very true that in seeking for the fruit we may find the tree, but the procedure is not the natural one. In seeking for holiness of heart an earnest believer may find the fullness of the Holy Spirit, but as a matter of fact it too often happens that a limited view of this kind leads to limited views of the possibilities of grace. On the other hand, if a believer seeks for the fullness of

the Holy Spirit, and receives the full measure of blessing which he craves, he must in the nature of the case receive with it all the graces which the Spirit of God implants in a wholly consecrated heart. The heart which is filled with the Spirit of God must be holy in the scriptural sense of that word, and must be filled with love, peace, joy, and every other grace which belongs to the Christian character, up to the normal measure which such a heart is able to attain.

If we look around us in the Christian world we may find a group of earnest Christians bowing before God in believing prayer, and entreating that they may be made partakers of the rest of soul which Jesus promised to all the weary and heavy-laden who should come to Him. Their ideal is that of perfect rest, a rest

> "Where fear and sin and grief expire,
> Cast out by perfect love."

Turning in another direction we find another group seeking just as earnestly for what they term heart purity. They remember the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart." They believe that such a blessing could never have been pronounced on an impossible attainment, and they are seeking earnestly for the blessing of purity. Another group attracts our attention, and here we

find an earnest longing for spiritual power. The promise of the Father given to the disciples of old is impressed deeply on their hearts, and feeling a sense of personal responsibility they long to be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit. The next group is composed of those who feel deeply the necessity of absolute and unreserved consecration to God. They are searching their hearts as they bow before the mercy-seat, to see if there is anything of earthly good which they have not yielded up as an offering to be laid upon God's altar. We might go on and find a dozen other groups, all composed of good and earnest people, and all seeking objects which are good in themselves; and yet, as a painful matter of fact, in the large majority of these cases it will be found that the results of these earnest pleadings are not wholly satisfactory.

I hesitate before venturing to write a single word which might seem to be penned in a critical spirit, or which might possibly be interpreted as unfriendly to meetings of this character. I have joined in many such myself, and have been greatly helped in doing so, and yet as the years go by it is more and more impressed upon my heart and mind that all such seekers could find a more excellent way by simply adopting the

method set before us in the beginning. In the Church of Pentecost all such objects as those enumerated above were realized. In the church of the present day the same conditions remain as at the beginning, and the men and women who are filled with the Spirit as were the great body of believers in the Church of Pentecost, will live in the daily realization of all those blessings which are often sought as if they must be received one by one, after earnest and often painful periods of anxious inquiry.

During recent years it has become extremely common in some circles to apply the term Pentecostal to all meetings which are held for the promotion of the higher phases of the Christian life. It is seldom profitable to spend time in discussing names, and yet it often seems as if this term was used without the full understanding of its meaning. In the Church of Pentecost the consecration of believers was unqualified, and those who were filled with the Spirit were also men and women anointed with power, and prepared for immediate and active service. In the church of the present day, on the other hand, strange anomalies constantly present themselves. We may often see men and women who seem persuaded that they have received the Pen-

tecostal blessing, and yet who apparently have no idea that any service is required of them other than that of ordinary Christians. They would be startled beyond expression if required to sell all that they possessed and give it to their Master. They are devout, and in some directions earnest as believers, but when measured by the standard of the Church of Pentecost they quickly appear as the merest dwarfs, instead of men and women who have reached the adult stage of Christian discipleship. Is not this unfortunate mistake, in some cases, at least, chiefly owing to the fact that a single phase of experience had been set before such persons as the object of desire, instead of the fullness of blessing which comes to those who are filled with the Holy Spirit?

If we study carefully the very brief history of the Church of Pentecost as we find it in the New Testament, only two conditions appear as necessary to attaining the standard of piety which was realized by the hundred and twenty when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The same gift was promised by Peter in his memorable sermon to all who would obey Jesus Christ and receive him as a personal Saviour. Absolute and unqualified obedience, together with absolute and unqualified trust in Christ as a present, living, and

omnipotent Saviour, will bring the fullness of the Holy Spirit to every believer who really craves such fullness, and a daily and hourly compliance with these conditions will maintain the life which is thus imparted. Nothing more is needed to make the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world the worthy offspring of the Church of Pentecost, than universal obedience and universal trust on the part of each and every believer. The conditions are few, simple, and in no sense whatever impossible.

Chapter VI

POWER FROM ON HIGH

VI

POWER FROM ON HIGH

But tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.—LUKE xxiv. 49 [R. V.]

But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.—ACTS I. 8 [R.V.]

Devout workers in the Lord's vineyard have always been deeply interested in the subject of spiritual power, which formed the basis of some of our Saviour's most remarkable promises, and which afterward became so conspicuous an element in the manifestation at Pentecost. Very many hearts are stirred with intense longings for a full measure of this power, which seems to be assured alike to all believers in a measure sufficient to make all things possible to the most lowly disciple. Sometimes such a desire may be stimulated by an unconscious ambition to achieve success, but much more frequently it springs up unbidden in the meek and lowly heart, and is cherished with no other motive than that of doing the Master's will and glorifying his name. The extraordinary manifestation of power which attended the sermon of Peter at Pentecost has very naturally led many to associate the exercise of this power almost exclusively with public preaching;

but this is to place narrow limits upon the promises which cover the whole sphere of the Christian life. The power with which Jesus promises to clothe his disciples was none other than that of the Holy Spirit, and it was not only to be shared by every believer in every age, but also in full measure. As it was not to be the privilege of a chosen few, but of all believers, so it was not to be given in a few extraordinary emergencies, but in each and every detail of Christian duty all along the pathway of life.

It is a mistake to assume, as is very often done, that this power from on high is merely one of the gifts of the Spirit, and that as such it may be given in greater or less measure, or not given at all, as God may see fit in the case of each disciple. Such a view would be correct enough in reference to the gift of prophecy, or the pastoral gift, but spiritual power is not restricted to a special bestowment for a special purpose. On the other hand it is a common grace offered and freely given to every individual. It is that which makes all spiritual gifts effectual. It accompanies the exercise of each and every gift, and is in short the divine element in the service which the Christian disciple renders to the Father of all. Instead of being a precious gift of a more or less miraculous charac-

ter, coming in exceptional cases and at rare intervals upon a few favoured persons, it is a common heritage of the whole household of believers, and is intended to make the Christian's life and his service a divine service.

In another chapter it has been shown how the baptism of the Spirit unites us to Christ, and the branch to the vine, and how we thus become partakers of the divine nature, and are enabled in our measure to live the Christ-life here on earth. This union is real and not ideal only, and brings the believer into vital union with his risen Master. He thus becomes a partaker of the love of Christ, of the peace, joy, meekness, gentleness, and every other grace which dwells in the Vine, and it follows necessarily that he becomes partaker of his Master's power. He does not wield the same infinite measure of power, but that which he shares in common with his Master is divine, and comes to Master and servant alike through the same agency of the Holy Spirit. This gift of power is held in absolute submission to the divine will. It is exercised in daily life as unconsciously, for the most part, as the physical power which the individual possesses, but in cases of special emergency or special responsibility its exercise becomes subject to special faith and prayer. Our Saviour had

created the world, but was born among men with self-limited physical power and self-limited knowledge. He became weary and hungry as we all do, and expressly affirmed that his knowledge of God's purposes was limited. If the Master refrained from the highest possibilities of this position, and if he voluntarily placed himself for a season in a sphere outside of certain divine prerogatives, much more must the disciple accept his humble mission in the same spirit, and use his spiritual power, not to glorify himself, or to excite wonder, or to accomplish "great things," but rather to do the Father's will, and thus walk in the Master's footsteps.

The errors into which even the best of Christians fall in considering the subject of spiritual power, are manifold. Of these, perhaps the most common as well as the most paralyzing to spiritual strength is that which assumes that the power which is sought is something which will become inherent in the believer. Without quite realizing what he is trying to do, the earnest and struggling disciple tries, like wrestling Jacob of old, to become the possessor of a power which will dwell in his own person, and be subject to his will, like that which dwells in his right arm. He forgets that the power which he longs to wield in his

Master's service is found in Christ, and that he can only make it his own by personally abiding in Him to whom all power belongs, and in whom all fullness dwells. "Apart from me ye can nothing." (R.V.)

For unknown ages the wild Indians roamed through the forests which surrounded the mighty Niagara, and no doubt they often gazed with wonder and awe upon the mad leap of the great river, as it took its headlong plunge over the precipice, and rushed with resistless might through the deep gorge below; but never in a single instance could it have occurred to any one of these children of the forest that there was a hidden power in the scene before him,—a mighty energy of nature upon which he might lay his hand, and with which he might co-operate in his industrial pursuits. Ages passed by, and at length the European appeared upon the scene. He had been familiar with the use of the water-wheel in his home land, but for long years he did not even think of applying the power which he knew was hurling those waters forward on their resistless course, to the practical purposes to which he had seen the power of little streams applied in other lands. At last, however, a few enterprising and courageous men made the attempt; channels and tunnels were cut through the solid rock, the rushing water was drawn aside,

and in due time ponderous machinery was moving steadily in obedience to a power which had been obtained from the mighty Niagara.

Time passed, and the scientist appeared upon the scene. He gazed upon the rushing river and falling torrent, and thought of the possibilities lying within the reach of such exhaustless energy; but what about those at a distance? Could this power be conveyed to them? Certainly it could. It could be transmuted into another form and made to bear another name, and while still dependent upon its original source, could thus be sent to cities and towns far away. In due time this ideal was fully realized, and the electric wire now carries the energy of Niagara for man's use as obediently as does the tunnel cut in the rock in the form of rushing water.

The great works constructed for the utilization of this power are in operation now; but surely it never occurs to the miller with his wheel, or the manufacturer with his dynamo, to gather up all his resources of energy, sever the connection with Niagara, and drive the machinery with power latent in the machinery itself. Such a suggestion would seem to him nothing short of an evidence of insanity on the part of the one suggesting it. Whatever may be done or left undone, the connection with Niagara must be preserved at any

and every hazard. Capital, machinery, skill, all are absolutely useless without that connection.

What Niagara is to these vast industrial structures with their ponderous machinery and astonishing capacity for work, such is the risen and enthroned Christ to the Christian believer, and especially to the worker in the Lord's vineyard. The believer has the promise of amazing power, but not in himself. Its source is in Christ, and in him alone. Like all God's spiritual gifts to the household of believers, this power from on high is dependent upon vital union with Christ, and this in its turn is dependent upon continuous obedience and sustained faith in Christ and the promises.

In recent years man has made gigantic strides in the region of scientific discovery, but he has created no new power and added nothing to the sum total of energy which was in the world before he appeared upon the scene. His great achievements are brought about by discovering the forces of nature and the laws which govern them, and putting himself in harmony with these so that he becomes literally a co-worker with nature. The Christian believer in like manner explores the spiritual realm, discovers its laws and its harmonies, learns of its unspeakable possibilities, puts himself in the right relation to all these by accepting union

with Christ, and enters upon a career of exploration and achievement compared with which the pursuits of the scientist are like the pastimes of children.

Closely allied to the mistake mentioned above, is the very common idea that when the anointing of spiritual power comes upon a believer, it will be in the form of a felt energy. The seeker after power hopes to become conscious of having found the object of his search. He wishes to rejoice in his strength, and to go forth like a young man eager to enter the lists at a race. It may possibly be so in the case of some, but if so the witnesses to this kind of experience are few. Much more frequently the experience of Jacob is that of the disciple who wrestles with the Angel of the Covenant. The moment of conscious and helpless weakness becomes the moment of supreme victory. The law of the kingdom of God is, that the believer's strength is made perfect in weakness. Hence it is a very common thing to hear testimonies to the effect that the first outward manifestation of unwonted power attending the word or works of the parties concerned, comes at a time of felt weakness, and to the very great surprise of the one to whom the power is vouchsafed.

If the story of Samson were proved a myth a hundred times over, it would not make his history

less instructive to the Christian yearning for the gift of power. Wherever he went the amazed people sought in vain to learn the source of his extraordinary physical strength. He was not a giant, and there does not appear to have been anything unusual in his physical development. Had his right arm been made of steel, or had there been an abnormal development of any organ of his body, attention would at once have been called to it. But nothing of the kind ever occurred, and when at last the truth was revealed, where lay the secret of his success? In the only part of the body in which there was absolutely no element of human strength whatever;—in his hair. Here we find most certainly a very striking lesson, an illustration of the higher truth revealed in a later age, that God's gift of power to mortals is one which is made perfect in human weakness.

As with strength, so with every element of human greatness. The man of spiritual power is a stranger to earthly pomp, worldly wisdom, and carnal motives. He does not come to the front with the air of a conquering hero. He may be eloquent, but more probably he will not be so accounted according to the standard of this world. The most successful preachers of the present generation; that is, the men whose preaching

produces permanent effects, the men who "bring things to pass", are seldom popularly regarded as either "able" or eloquent. The Philistines were not more curious to discover the secret of Samson's power than were the vast majority of both religious and worldly critics to find out the secret of Mr. Spurgeon's success in his early career, or of Mr. Moody's, when he suddenly appeared before the British public with his immense assemblies and his simple but effective preaching. The power of Mr. Sankey's singing became the subject of even more bewildering inquiry. Eminent musical critics were quoted to prove that his knowledge of music was defective, and his voice untrained, while his selections were regarded as beneath literary criticism; and yet the amazing fact remained that his singing had an element of religious power in it which none of the trained choirs of the land, nor all of them combined, could hope to produce.

Every Christian worker who is eager to receive at his Master's hand an anointing of power, and especially every preacher who aspires to the largest possible measure of what is called ministerial success, should ever bear in mind that one important element of power which is bestowed from on high, is simplicity. The overwhelming grandeur of the scene which attended the succession of Elisha to

the office and work of the mighty Elijah, has profoundly affected the imagination of multitudes of earnest Christians, and an eager desire to be robed in a mantle of power is often expressed by devout disciples, who are as sincere as they are earnest. This desire is also both inspired and intensified by our Saviour's farewell promise of an enduement of power to his disciples ; but those who are impressed by this conception of power, as that of a mantle received and worn, should remember that Elijah's mantle was at best only a Bedouin blanket made of camel's hair, or possibly a robe of sheepskin. This mighty child of the desert was the last man on earth to put on the "soft raiment" of luxurious livers, or the pompous purple of the palace. He was one of the greatest and grandest men, in ages past or present, but his life was simplicity itself. Elisha took up the forsaken mantle, it is true, but it was Elijah's desert blanket and not a robe from the palace of Jezreel. Jesus would indeed bestow a mantle of power upon those who are willing to wear it, but those who aspire to this distinction must remember that the robe, like the Master who gives it, has no earthly beauty which will lead the children of this world to desire it, although in the eyes of those who gaze from heaven upon earthly scenes, it may be radiant with beauty and glory.

The believer who has received the anointing of power may be expected as a general rule to receive with it a meek and quiet spirit. He has confidence in the Holy Spirit. He has learned the meaning of the words, "Thine is the power". Vociferous prayer and stormy preaching may become the habit of a good man, but are by no means an evidence of spiritual power. Not a few good men fall into the mistake of supposing that Jacob won his great victory by his persistent wrestling, but fail to perceive that it was clinging weakness rather than overcoming strength which made Jacob a man of princely power. The man of scientific power is one who quietly trusts the energies of nature to work with him; the man of spiritual power is the believer who calmly trusts the Holy Spirit to co-operate with him as he performs his share of the task which he believes God has assigned to him. In a very blessed sense the Kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, but it is the violence of faith operating in the unseen spiritual realm, and not that of mental or physical effort which operates in a wholly different sphere.

When a child I often visited a small country mill, where I used to watch with unfailing interest the miller at his work. Winding along a grassy slope above the mill was the quiet mill-race, in

which the water lay with a surface as smooth as glass. Often and again I have seen the miller lift a bag of corn and pour the grain into a large hopper, and then reaching up his hand he would pull a well-worn leather strap which hung against the wall, and immediately there would be a response without. The water released from the race would begin to dash itself against the old moss-grown wheel, and in five seconds the great ponderous wheel would begin to revolve and all the machinery within would be set in motion. The miller was the man of power on the occasion, but his part of the actual work was very small indeed. He never helped the machinery to work, and above all he never went out and tried to hasten things by pushing forward the water in the mill-race.

It has sometimes seemed to me when observing the vigorous efforts, both vocal and physical, made by some good men to add interest to a meeting, or to stimulate their own earnestness, that they were trying to push the water in the mill-race. Calm confidence in God does not seem to be the habitual resource of such persons in times when God's immediate power is needed, and when nothing but God's power can avail. Does not a mistake of this kind too frequently characterize some of the modern revival methods which may be witnessed in our churches?

Very many persons earnestly covet the gift of power from on high under the mistaken impression that its chief purpose is to make its possessor a soul-winner. Many a preacher has sought this power with intense earnestness, in the hope that sinners might be convicted under his preaching, and when filled with the Spirit has afterward been surprised that the effects which he had expected to see did not attend his word. Jesus did not teach his disciples to cherish so narrow an expectation as this. It does indeed seem that he connected a special promise of power with his last commission, and that all who became his witnesses are assured of this special aid; but other assurances had been given concerning power in prayer, and concerning the whole round sphere of Christian duty to his disciples in all ages.

The power to win souls is a precious gift, and in some measure is no doubt given to every believer; but it may not be a special power in a given case, nor should it be assumed that it will be the most prominent gift received. As remarked before, this power from on high is not the greatest of a series of gifts, but is rather that peculiar bestowment which makes all the normal gifts of the Spirit effective. As these gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit according to his infinite wisdom, so the power which comes impartially upon all alike will

attend the efforts of all in normal measure. The preacher in the pulpit may indeed be enabled to speak like an anointed Elijah, but not less really will the same Spirit aid the devout child as he lisps his simple prayer at his mother's knee.

The modern Church has much to learn concerning her privilege to be robed with power from on high. The standard of experience realized in the Church of Pentecost should be the standard of the Universal Church of to-day. There should be the old-time power in the pulpit, in the prayer-meeting, in the Sunday-school, in the social circle, and in the daily round of Christian duty of each individual. The feeble members of the flock should become as David, while the modern David should become as the angel of Jehovah. The pentecostal power would place the Universal Church upon a new vantage ground at the opening of the century just at hand. It would be more than equal to a reinforcement of a hundred million believing men and women. In giving the Christian host power with God, it would lift the Church above the struggling penury with which her aggressive work is now carried on. In giving power with men, it would inspire all hearts with invincible courage, unite all in common faith and prayer, and lead all forward in a combined assault on the powers of darkness which

would make the very gates of hell to tremble.

To the individual Christian who yearns for the enduement of power, it need only be said that no such blessing need be sought apart from the fullness of the Holy Spirit. As John said of the Saviour, that at the beginning he was with God and also that he was God, so it may be said of the power from on high ; it is in the Spirit, and it is the Spirit. It is God co-operating with men. This highest power known to mortals can be found only at the feet of the risen Son of God, whose divine prerogative it is to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Let the earnest inquirer go to Christ himself for the gift, not of power, but of the Spirit's fullness, and with this fullness will come power, beyond that of mortals, for the peculiar task which the Master will assign to the suppliant. What that service will be is known only to the Master himself ; but unless the disciple is willing to accept any service, to pursue any line of duty which may fall to his lot, he will seek in vain for the anointing of power. Perfect obedience is a condition of the full manifestation of the spiritual life. May God, the Father of all, who tenderly leads every sincere seeker after light upon the pathway of duty, guide the reader's feet into the pathway not only of duty, but also of power from on high.

Chapter VII

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

VII

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

"The kingdom of heaven is within you."

Luke xvii. 21.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

Eph. iii. 17.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Gal. v. 22, 23.

"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

Eph. i. 13, 14.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

The vital union of a believer with his risen Saviour, whereby he is made partaker of the Christ-life, brings him at once into touch with the heavenly world. He is made to "taste of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come." (Heb. vi. 4, 5.) He becomes at once heir to a heavenly inheritance, and a partaker of its unspeakable riches and glory. No more persistent mistake is made by superficial readers of the Bible, than that of supposing that heaven is an invisible realm of matchless splendour of which we know nothing, and can know nothing, until we are ushered into its golden courts at the end of our earthly pilgrimage. Such, however, is by no means the teaching of scripture, nor is it in harmony with the

experience of the most spiritually-minded believers. It most certainly was not the ideal set before the disciples by our Saviour. So far from it, he taught them that the kingdom of heaven was set up in the believer's heart on earth, and the early Christians received with the gift of the Spirit rich spiritual manifestations which they were taught to regard as an "earnest" of their final inheritance in glory.

This metaphor of the "earnest" is one of the most beautiful and expressive figures to be found in the whole range of Bible promises. The custom of paying a small portion of the price agreed upon between buyer and seller as "earnest money," is still very common in oriental countries. It binds the agreement firmly, and the party receiving the money knows that the moiety given him is a pledge that the full amount promised will be paid in similar coin. In like manner the Holy Spirit in the heart gives the Christian disciple an earnest; that is, a foretaste of heaven. He is made a partaker of a love which is divine, of a peace which is perennial as the flow of a mighty river, of a joy which is unfading, and of a hope which is inseparable from the living Christ revealed in his heart. He truly tastes of "the powers of the world to come," and heaven is to him more—unspeakably more—than an unseen and an unknown realm of beauty which he is to see and enjoy at some future day.

Nothing could be clearer or more expressive than the language of our Saviour in which he taught his disciples that they were to be made partakers of the heavenly graces with which he was himself endowed in full measure :—" Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John xiv. 27.) " These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you." (John xv. 11.) And the last petition which these disciples heard from his lips before his betrayal, was, if possible, even more expressive ;—" I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John xvii. 26.) Truly the lowly disciple, to whom it is given to be as his Lord, both in lowliness and in exalted privilege, is made a partaker of heavenly gifts while yet a pilgrim and a stranger on earth. He lives on earth, but belongs to heaven, and while for a season he sojourns here, he is favoured with a rich foretaste of the endless bliss which is assured to every believer in the paradise above. The peace of God, that of which Jesus spoke as " My peace," the love of Christ, the joy which no man can mar or take away, the hope which brings the unseen into view, and the whole rich cluster of spiritual graces which are created in the heart by the immediate power of the Holy Spirit, all belong to heaven, and form a

part of the earnest which assures us of our heirship to the "purchased possession" in the better world.

These heavenly gifts are spoken of in the New Testament as the "fruits of the Spirit." A partial list of these is given in one of the passages placed at the head of this chapter, but the possibilities of human language would be exhausted before a full list could be given. It is with reference to these manifestations in the believer's heart that we are told that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him." These glowing words have, it is true, been usually applied to the unseen splendours of the better world, but the clause with which the verse concludes clearly connects them with the privileges of believers still on earth;—"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Not only can they be revealed, but they actually are revealed to living disciples. In other words the disciple knows in part, and can testify in part, but at times he is taken up into some mount of transfiguration where special communion is vouchsafed to him, and where for a season he seems to dwell in the very holy of holies, and like the ancient prophet and saint is permitted to talk face to face with God himself.

While myriads of believers have borne witness to the reality of these spiritual graces in the

heart, no one has yet succeeded in defining them. For instance, if one whose heart is filled and swayed by the peace of God, were asked to state in simple words how this peace differs from the natural tranquility of mind and heart which is often experienced by persons who are not Christians, it is probable that the answer would be that one is earthly and the other heavenly; but no Christian, however gifted in thought or speech, can explain clearly what he means by the word "heavenly." He knows that a quiet, deep and sweet emotion has taken possession of his inner being, and something which can only be likened to a divine instinct assures him that this has been wafted into his soul by that Breath which bloweth where it listeth. It is thus also with the new love which is implanted in his heart, a love which in a special sense attests his having become a partaker of the divine nature. It is not human affection, it is not an earthly affection at all; it is not a feeling of benevolence, but it is the love of Christ, a love with a constraining power found nowhere else save in a Christian believer's heart. It is redolent of heaven, and seems ever to spread a heavenly fragrance around its possessor. Nor is the feeling of joy which springs up in a believer's heart a product of this world. In words of touching assurance Jesus spoke of this grace as "My

joy," and as such it was one of his special gifts to those whom he recognized as his own. Many happy hearts can always be found in our world, many sources of earthly joy are known to worldly people ; but the joy of heaven, the joy which is "unutterable and full of glory," the joy which springs directly from the Spirit dwelling in the inner sanctuary of the soul, is something its possessor will never confound with any feeling of happiness or pleasure known to the children of this world.

The fruits of the Spirit are but so many elements which belong to the kingdom of God in the heart. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) The Spirit who reveals Christ as enthroned in the heart, reveals also the things of Christ, the things which pertain to this inner kingdom. Hence the presence of these heavenly graces in the believer's soul always carries with it a conscious presence of the King in the person of Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God. The believer thus favoured and thus endowed with royal blessings from the hand of the King himself, may truly affirm that he is heir to a heavenly kingdom, and that he has already entered in part into the possession of his inheritance. "We which have believed do enter into rest." (Heb. iv. 3.)

It is very often supposed that this foretaste of heaven which is granted to the believer while still

on earth, is a kind of holy rapture, and is a state of grace chiefly to be desired for its own sake. In other words, the same mistake is made in reference to the "earnest" of heaven which is generally made concerning the heavenly inheritance itself. To many, probably to most persons, heaven stands for little more than a final refuge from every form of earthly ill, and a vast realm filled with every possible form of pure delight. In like manner a mistaken impression prevails very generally concerning the manifestation of the Spirit in the heart, and the somewhat vague language in which many speak of their own inner experiences does not a little to foster this mistake. The kingdom of God in the heart is not meat or drink, nor is it a rapturous delight without purpose, and without any special bearing upon life and character. Heaven is doubtless a sphere of ceaseless activity, and the foretaste of heaven which the Christian is permitted to enjoy on earth is a part of the discipline which is needed to prepare him for the higher and holier activities of that better world. Happiness for its own sake has no place in the Christian system, in either earth or heaven, and mere rapture of the soul is by no means the whole, or the chief part, of what is meant by the fruits of the Spirit revealed in the believer's heart.

So far is this from being the case, that according

to New Testament teaching the fruits of the Spirit serve in an important degree to form a basis of character, and also add greatly to the power of their possessor as a worker in his Master's vineyard. Love is more than an emotion; it is the "bond of perfectness", the power which binds together in harmony and completeness all the virtues and graces which enter into the structure of Christian character. Peace is an element of power, and as such it both "rules" and "keeps" in the realm of personal experience. Joy is a source of strength;—"The joy of the Lord is your strength." It adds also to the efficiency of the Christian worker, and hence the ancient psalmist prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; * * * then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." (Psalm li. 12, 13.) Hope is to the anxious soul in peril what an anchor is to the storm-tossed ship. Meekness is more than an inoffensive disposition; it is an element of success, and in time will hold the world in its quiet grasp. Righteousness is a royal gift, and ensures its possessor of kinship with those who sit upon thrones and dispense justice with royal dignity and power. Long-suffering and gentleness and goodness,—what are these but reproductions of qualities of character which belonged to the Master himself when here on earth?

In the very brief history of the Church of Pentecost contained in the New Testament, we could not expect to find any detailed account of the spiritual attainments, or even a distinct statement of the general standard of experience, of the whole body of disciples. We only know that all, except no doubt a few misplaced intruders like Ananias and his wife, were filled with the Spirit, and we may infer, of course, that the fruits of the Spirit were abundantly manifest both in daily life and personal character. Indeed, partial evidence of this is not wanting. The whole body of the disciples, at home and in public, constituted a joyous community. At home they ate their food with gladness, and abroad they rejoiced even in bold defiance of hostile threats, and actual suffering at the hands of persecuting rulers. They were bound together by a personal affection which made them seem like one vast family of brothers and sisters. They were animated by a faith, in which there was no element of either doubt or fear, and they lived in daily communion with the Holy Spirit, and in constant touch with the kingdom of God, with which they had become spiritually united. Church membership was identical with membership in the kingdom which Christ had set up on earth, and they knew and loved their Lord and King. Nominal membership in the little community was un-

known. Impostors might have been found among them, and immature members were there in large numbers; but it is probable that in the whole community there was not one person who held and avowed a merely nominal connection with the church. Such a person would have found his position so illogical as to make it more than embarrassing. Both the glowing spirit of those within the church, and the hostile spirit of those without, must have made it practically impossible for any one to hold a place in the community and yet cherish feelings of indifference toward either the church or its Master.

The fruits of the Spirit, especially when present in normal measure in the general body of believers, and not in a few exceptional individuals only, impress observers with a peculiar conviction that there is a divine element in the Church of Christ, and that the living God is in the midst of the people. Hence the Church can no more dispense with the graces which adorn the Christian life than she can do without the divine power which upholds and sustains her. The power to repeat the miracles of the New Testament age is not needed so much as the exhibition before the world, especially the materialistic world of the present day, of a life which is manifestly divine. Such a life belongs to heaven, and multitudes of the children

of this world are led, in most cases by a kind of unconscious instinct, to recognize this fact. On the other hand a man bearing the Christian name, and yet not having become a partaker of spiritual life in Christ, cannot in the very nature of the case impress worldly persons as differing materially from themselves. The divine element is wanting in his life, and no amount of formal religiousness can supply its place.

It is difficult to resist a serious misgiving concerning the spiritual tone of large numbers of our modern churches. If their membership is made up of persons who are enriched with the priceless fruits of the Spirit, no evidence of that fact is apparent to the ordinary observer. Tens of thousands of new members are admitted every year, and in many cases these pledged disciples of Christ know nothing of the new life, of the love of Christ, of the peace of God, or of joy in the Holy Spirit; nor do they expect to know. They have not been taught as were the inquirers who flocked for admittance to the doors of the Church of Pentecost, and they merely join the throng, already too large, of those who pass their lives in regarding heaven and all heavenly things, not perhaps excepting God himself, as far away in the future, and as subjects of religious contemplation rather than divine realities to be sought and found in the present life.

It has been assumed throughout this brief chapter that the various fruits of the Spirit may very properly become subjects of personal testimony, or of inquiry and personal teaching, as occasion may demand. Some very excellent people will dissent from this view, and maintain that the best taste demands rather that reticence be observed in all matters which pertain to the deepest emotions of our religious nature. Sometimes, no doubt, the Christian disciple is favoured with a spiritual vision which he distinctly feels is to be told to no man ; but the precedents furnished in the direct teachings and the general tone of the New Testament are all opposed to any such rule of reticence. The early Christians, and especially Paul, the apostle, spoke with the utmost freedom of their spiritual experiences whenever the occasion called for such testimony ; but there was nothing perfunctory, much less inquisitorial in the performance of this duty. They recognised, as every Christian should recognise, their obligation as witnesses, and were ready with their testimony whenever it seemed that occasion called for it. Religious testimony loses its power the moment it ceases to be spontaneous and free. It is but natural that most persons should be less free to speak of what transpires in the hidden chambers of their hearts, than of that

which takes place in the outer world, and yet it is in these hidden chambers that the most painful sorrows often dwell, the heaviest chains are riveted, and the deepest darkness reigns; and when God sends a glad deliverance to those in sorest need, it would be strange indeed if any natural shrinking from publicity, or any sense of the impropriety of speaking of personal matters, should seal the lips of the one who has felt the touch of the divine hand, or heard the soothing words of the divine voice. No; whether it to be the healing of a diseased body, or of a broken heart; whether it be the opening of prison doors or release from the bondage of the soul, the ransomed disciple should ever be ready to ascribe both the power and the glory to Him who has said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

Chapter VIII

THE GIFTS OF PENTECOST

VIII

THE GIFTS OF PENTECOST

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit . . . . . For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

1 Cor. xii. 4, 8, 9, 10, 11.

"When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men....And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

Eph. iv. 8, 11.

The mission which was given to the anointed believers at Pentecost, not only of making Christ known to all nations, but of themselves exhibiting the Christ-life on earth, and carrying forward the Master's work, not only in its general features, but also with fullness of detail, made it absolutely necessary that the disciples should be endowed with a special preparation for their work. This could hardly have been done by clothing each weak mortal with all the gifts which the Master himself possessed and hence we find a rich profusion of spiritual gifts and graces was distributed among the whole body of disciples, in such order and in such measure as seemed best to Infinite Wisdom. These gifts were manifold, and for the most part seem to have been bestowed in full measure. Several of them are found in the Epis-

tles, in which twenty or more are enumerated, although some of the terms employed are probably included, in part at least, in other terms; yet on the other hand it must be noted that the several gifts are only alluded to incidentally, and in no case is it assumed that God's bounty was exhausted in bestowing those gifts which are mentioned. So far from it, we may assume that the servants of Jesus Christ in every age are equipped for the peculiar emergencies which they have to meet, and there is certainly no presumption in venturing to believe that in our day a richer endowment of such gifts is not only needed, but is actually given, than during the first century. This is particularly true in the wide and ever widening sphere of woman's work when there are opportunities now set before the Church which were impossible twenty centuries ago.

We may safely assume that the miraculous element in the strict sense of the word miraculous, has disappeared from the list of New Testament gifts. Miraculous power has always attended the bestowment of a new revelation from God to men, and would seem to be needed in order fully to attest such a divine message; but now that revelation is complete, miracles have disappeared from the Church. By the word "miracle" here is meant, of course, not merely a supernatural or extra-

ordinary event, but an act which involves creative power, such as healing a leper, giving eyes to one born blind, or raising the dead. We may for the same reason cease to expect a repetition of the gift of tongues, and of course with the withdrawal of this gift the power to interpret may be expected to disappear also. The somewhat vexed question of healing the sick, though not necessarily included among miraculous gifts, would seem to be so closely linked with the main question as to be practically inseparable from it. With these exceptions, however, the gifts of Pentecost are still the heritage of the Church, and modern Christians do themselves a great wrong when they neglect to equip themselves for every form of service which the Spirit and providence of God may require at their hands.

If an evangelist were to visit a community of unbelievers and preach Christ to the people, and if the Spirit should give power to the word, and fifty or one hundred persons were to accept Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, the stranger might confidently assume that among the converts would be found one or more persons gifted with a measure of leadership; that one or more would be able to speak to edification, or to pray with liberty; and that a dozen would develop gifts for instructing the young, witnessing for Christ, attending to

material interests, or in short, doing all the work which God would have his people perform. If the reader should recall, as he probably will, one or more instances in which no such prepared persons were found among the converts of such an evangelist, it may be assumed, almost with absolute certainty, that the persons in question were not instructed "unto" the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is God's plan to enrich his people in every age and in every land with all the gifts needful for carrying forward the Master's work, and all over the world illustrations are constantly occurring which, in essential fact, are almost as striking as in the case of the transformed believers of the first Pentecost.

When mention is made of the bestowment of the ancient gifts of Pentecost upon modern believers, even though the miraculous element is carefully excluded, it is probable that very many, if not indeed most persons, will be ready to assume that the more extraordinary of these gifts are most to be coveted, and first to be expected; but such is by no means the mind of the Spirit. In the early Church the gift of tongues, which served little purpose save as a "sign," was more highly prized than the much more valuable gift of prophecy, which enables believers to speak with both authority and power. The one gift was a

marvel which excited attention, and perhaps admiration, while the other was a means of grace which brought men and women into direct co-operation with the Holy Spirit. The gifts which the Church of the present day most needs, are not by any means those which, in modern phrase, would give a sensational character to the work of believers. It is an absolute condition of God's co-operation with men that the servant must subordinate his will to that of the Master, and accept those posts of duty, and those errands of mercy, which are assigned from above. The service of the Master when on earth was a lowly service, and even when exhibiting the most amazing tokens of his power, he never for a single day or a single hour allowed himself to forget that his mission was to a fallen world, to a bruised and helpless people, to sinful and sorrowing multitudes. His miracles were incidental to his chief work, and not the latter to his miracles. The modern disciple who would be enriched with the enduement of spiritual gifts, would do well first of all to ponder the meaning of the words, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."

If we enter any one of ten thousand, or twenty thousand, churches of the present day, we find a condition somewhat like the following: A minister is in the pulpit, who prepares and delivers two dis-

courses on Sunday, and perhaps a shorter talk during the week. A choir is in charge of the singing, and at the public meeting a few of the people join in this part of the worship. A Sunday-school is connected with the church, and the children are early taught to worship God. At the weekly prayer meeting a very limited number of persons are able to lead in prayer, while as to testimony, in some churches it is never heard. In liturgical churches the people more generally join in public devotions, but are more generally silent in extemporary prayer and testimony. Family religion is recognised, at least in a general way. The people are expected to live upright lives, and in the main do so. For these Christian churches we ought to feel devoutly thankful; but when we attempt to measure them by the standard of the Church of Pentecost, the contrast is startling. In the latter Church all had received at least the gift of utterance. A tongue of flame had descended and sat upon each disciple. Every member of that notable Church could speak forth the praises of God, could testify to the power of the risen Christ, and could join in vocal prayer to the Master of assemblies. If we are to receive an impartation of the gifts of Pentecost in our modern churches, we ought to be willing, and perhaps ought to expect, that the very first gifts sent down upon

us shall be the power of speech. If the sign only could be given, if the lambent flame could again be seen descending on waiting disciples, there might be a more general interest in the subject; but the era of symbols and shadows has passed away, and we are now face to face with practical realities. The ancient tongues of flame were ours, as well as the token given to the hundred and twenty believers at Pentecost, and mean as much to us as to that band of faithful disciples who have ever since been regarded as the most highly favoured of the race.

The Church of the present day is certainly, although somewhat slowly, beginning to realize the supreme importance of active labour in the vineyard of the Master. An idle Christian is an utter misnomer. The disciple is in the world to represent the Master, and must in some way, in some department of Christian activity, render actual service in the Master's name. What shall that service be? Where, and in what way, can the willing disciple find his allotted task?

Among the spiritual gifts enumerated in the first chapter of twelfth Corinthians, we find the singular term "helps." The word is a very simple one, and for that very reason is liable to be overlooked. It is not in average human nature, as we find it in life, to appreciate the privilege of being

allowed to help other people, and yet a call for help is the unspoken cry of universal humanity. We all need help in some form or other, and the best instincts of the renewed Christian heart will ever prompt its possessor to lend a helping hand to any and every one in need. The poor need help, the unfortunate, the bruised, the stranger, the sick and the afflicted, the tempted and the tried, the erring and the sinning, the falling and the fallen, the widow and the orphan, the burdened and the weary; these and a multitude of others are ever needing help, and if they do not often find a tongue with which to express their want, their very dumbness only adds point and edge to their mute appeals. In a world so full of human needs no disciple of Him who went about doing good, need for a single hour be without a task. A willing heart will soon prompt willing hands and willing feet to action, and the willing disciple will thus become an active worker in his Master's blessed name.

It is very true, no doubt, that the word "helps" quoted above, standing in the connection in which we find it, primarily refers to the work of assistants in what might be called church work. Thus Mark at first was a helper to Barnabas and Paul, and was succeeded in this work by Silas when the two first missionaries separated. But the term is

not one which can be limited to certain specific officers, nor can it be confined in any strict sense of the word to church work. A modern deaconess, for instance, who acts as a pastor's assistant, is a helper in the church ; but her duties will constantly carry her into environments where no church interest is recognized, and where she simply appears as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is still more true of many Christian workers who hold no recognized office, who have been formally appointed to no allotted tasks, and yet who habitually, in season and out of season, lend helping hands to any and everyone whom they may find in need.

The position and work of a helper in a church are prizes not often coveted among modern Christians, and yet in the limited sense of ecclesiastical assistants the "helps" of the early Church are still greatly needed, and can be most usefully employed. It is not a healthy or hopeful symptom among the young men who aspire to the Christian ministry, that very few of them are willing to accept the position of assistants for even a single year. It is not thus in law or in medicine, where most young men prize the privilege of beginning their life work in association with some older and more experienced person. This, however, is a minor question. A host of helpers are needed in every department

of Christian work, and the need is too great to permit us to hope that it can be supplied by any class of what might be called official workers. All Christians must be enlisted in this hallowed service. The disciple of Jesus Christ should be the helper of universal humanity, and every believer should, within the sphere in which God's providence places him, accept his mission, and keep his hand ever held out towards those who need help.

A ministry so universal as this can be created in one way only. The anointing of the Spirit which came upon the believers at Pentecost is an abiding inheritance of the Church. It will come in every age in greater or less measure according to the consecration and faith of the Church. All the gifts needed will be given, and given in the measure which the occasion may demand. The same Spirit which anointed the apostles at Pentecost can raise up and empower a whole race of apostles for the coming achievements of the twentieth century. The anointing which made the prophetic gift the common privilege of sons and daughters and house-servants, will come again upon waiting millions and move them to bear witness with more than mortal power to the risen Son of God. A race of teachers will be raised up to instruct the coming millions and myriads who in the next century may be expected to turn

from paganism to Christianity. Pastors will rise up in every town and village to care for churches, while evangelists will go forth throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth proclaiming the evangel of the mighty angel whom John saw flying through the mid-heaven, having the everlasting gospel for all nations.

It may surprise any one who makes a careful search for references to spiritual gifts in the New Testament, to discover that neither prayer nor preaching is included in any of the lists of which mention is made above. This seeming omission is not owing to any want of importance in these two prominent gifts, but can easily be accounted for by the fact that they are included in other gifts. First of all, we find the gift of "utterance" mentioned, which certainly includes, in a measure, a provision for both of these exercises. Then we find mention of "faith" among spiritual gifts; that is, the gift of faith as distinct from the grace of faith, and we can hardly conceive of the exercise of such a gift apart from prayer. In like manner preaching is so inseparably connected with prophecy, in the New Testament sense of the word, that the two words may often be used interchangably. As a matter of fact, the need of special help from the Holy Spirit, in both prayer and preaching, is universally confessed by spiritually-

minded Christians, and the extraordinary power of the Spirit's anointing in the exercise of both gifts is one of the most striking features of the brief history of the Church of Pentecost. The mention of the word "power" suggests the thought that this, after all, is the real test of all Pentecostal gift. The anointing of the Spirit does not give believers extraordinary gifts, so much as it enables them to use ordinary gifts in an extraordinary way. The original promise of Pentecost was an assurance of power, and this becomes in every age, not a special favour granted to a few, but a common inheritance pertaining to the whole Christian life.

I have purposely reserved what I wished to say concerning some of the prominent gifts of Pentecost, lest attention might become too much concentrated upon these, to the exclusion of other gifts which are equally vital to the best interests of the Church of Christ. Stephen was anointed for a holy ministry, and Paul received a wonderful commission; but the maiden who is anointed to nurse the sick and minister to the dying, or the young man who is sent to teach converts rescued from a degrading paganism, receives a calling which is as saintly and as heroic as that of Stephen or Paul.

In the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians we find a brief list of our Saviour's gifts

to his Church, with evident reference to the anointing of the Spirit received at Pentecost; but instead of speaking, as elsewhere, of the gift in the abstract, some of the anointed workers are enumerated as God's gift to his people—"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Ephesians iv. 11). Highest in position among these is placed the apostle, but the most richly endowed is the prophet. Some men, like Paul, seem to have been wonderfully enriched by receiving a measure of nearly every one of the gifts of Pentecost; while others, like Philip, are anointed for only one special form of work; but in each and every case the anointing was by "the same Spirit." It is still thus in the Church of Christ. The same Spirit distributes his gifts among the disciples of Christ as at the beginning. We cannot tell why some are chosen for one work, and some for another; but it ought to suffice for us to be assured that the distribution in each and every case will be such as will best promote the highest interests of both the workers and the work.

Chapter IX

PROPHETS AND PROPHECY

IX

PROPHETS AND PROPHECY

"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."

1 Cor. xiv. 1.

"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Rev. xix. 10.

"Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them."

Numbers xi. 29.

"Wherefore brethren, covet to prophesy."

1 Cor. xiv. 39.

When the prophet Joel announced the advent of the full-orbed Christian dispensation as afterwards realized at Pentecost, he spoke of only three special gifts which were to attend the outpouring of the Spirit in full measure, and these three gifts were so closely allied as to be little more than different phases of the same blessing. "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." (Acts ii. 17, 18). The solemn portents of the sun robed in darkness, and the moon tinged with blood, with other wonders in heaven and signs on earth, cannot be understood in any degree literally, and are in keeping with the verbal symbolism which is so often employed in con-

nection with predictive utterances in other parts of the scriptures. The essential facts contained in the prediction of Joel were, that a great era of salvation was to be opened to the race; that this era was to be distinguished by the universal gift of the Spirit in full measure, and that the presence of the Spirit was to be specially marked by an extraordinary manifestation of prophetic power, bestowed, not upon a select few, but upon the whole body of believers. The ancient "seer" was to re-appear, not in his old-time mystic character, but as a vigorous, zealous, and intelligent youth, and the night vision, once the special privilege of a limited class, was to become a common visitation of mature believers, whether as a means of personal comfort, or to qualify them for a more effective service. No mention was made by the prophet of an era of miracles, of the wonderful gift of tongues, of the dead restored to life, of the lame man leaping as a hart, or of invisible hands opening prison-doors; but instead of these or other wonders we have the simple prediction that the disciples of Jesus Christ when anointed with the Spirit, should be endowed with the gift of prophecy. Nor does it seem less remarkable that the prophet said nothing about the spiritual graces which were to descend in a mighty shower at Pentecost. No mention was made of the en-

larged measure of love, peace, joy, hope, and other hallowed fruits of the Spirit, which were to become the heritage of believers from the Pentecostal morning on through all the following ages. All else was passed by, while prophecy was made the distinctive gift of the coming era. Surely a subject to which such prominence was assigned by the Holy Spirit, is worthy of our careful and prayerful consideration.

It is greatly to be regretted that the word "prophecy," like several other scriptural terms of vital importance, has by the force of popular usage, gradually acquired a greatly restricted meaning since the era of King James. When the authorized version of the Bible was first published, the words prophecy and preach were so nearly alike in popular English usage that they could to a great extent be used interchangeably. In illustration of this fact the late Dean Stanley called attention to the fact that Jeremy Taylor's book on "The Liberty of Prophesying" might, if issued in the present generation, have been entitled, The Right to Preach; but a great change has come over the word since Jeremy Taylor's day. Slowly, and for the most part imperceptibly, many such terms have taken on new meanings, and it thus happens that the word prophet is applied almost exclusively to one who predicts future events.

The natural result has been that among English-speaking people the full force of the scriptural term is not generally understood, and the value of this priceless gift of Pentecost is in consequence not fully appreciated. A predictive element is certainly found in nearly all prophecy, but this is often incidental to the main message, and seldom occupies the leading place in a given discourse.

A very apt and in the main accurate definition of the term prophecy has been proposed by substituting forth-telling for foretelling. The prophet in the scriptural sense of the word is one who is empowered both by authority and by the special aid of the Holy Spirit, to declare the mind of God, and hence one who speaks forth or proclaims truths which are put into his heart by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. Hence another definition has been proposed for which a basis is found, at least in part, in the meaning of the original word, which makes a prophet one who speaks for another; but in both of these cases the essential meaning is the same. The prophet is very much more than one who merely predicts future events. He speaks for God. He not only receives authority to speak, but the message is given him by the Holy Spirit. The precise words which he is to utter may not be, and as a matter of fact seldom are, put upon his lips, but he is

moved by the Holy Spirit to speak, his heart is warmed, and his mind illuminated, in such measure as may be necessary to enable him effectively to deliver the message which God sends through him. The inspiration of the prophet is in most respects very much like that of the writers of the inspired Scriptures. In former times, and to a slight extent in our own day, it was a common belief that the entire Bible had been written by the direct dictation of the Holy Spirit. This is the universal idea of inspiration among Mohammedans at the present day, and was received by them, no doubt, from the ancient Jews. Mohammed professed to receive the Koran in chapters directly from heaven, where it had been prepared before his birth, and hence every word and every letter of the book has from the first been regarded by pious Mohammedans as a direct product of divine inspiration. It need hardly be said that the Christian doctrine of inspiration is very different. So far from being a mere stenographer, taking down notes as dictated to him, the inspired Christian writer uses his own style, selects his own words, and has recourse to his own stores of knowledge as far as the occasion and subject may demand. The Holy Spirit quickens his mental powers, guides his thoughts, "moves" him to treat of certain topics, and as far as may be necesssary

imparts to him new truths, and reveals more or less clearly the outlines of future events.

The inspiration of the prophet differs very little, if at all, from this, unless it be in the scope of the subjects which the Spirit suggests, and the measure of the inspiration which is imparted. If the inspired writer is more than a stenographer, the inspired speaker is more than a phonograph. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," or, in other words, the prophet retains command of his own mental and vocal powers, and acts as a responsible moral agent both in what he says and in what he omits to say. He may be directed by the Spirit to go to a given place, to speak to a certain person or persons, and to deliver a specific message, but in obeying the instructions given to him he uses the powers with which God has entrusted him, and depends on special help to the extent which he may find it needful.

The gift of prophecy dates back to the earliest pages in the history of the race, but like nearly all of the more precious of God's gifts it had a gradual development, and only reached a full manifestation at the ushering in of the Pentecostal era. The writer, or perhaps the editor, of the first Book of Samuel, tells us that a man who in his day was called a prophet, had at an earlier period been called a "seer." (1 Sam. ix. 9). It is main-

tained by many eminent writers, and the theory seems extremely probable, that the most ancient form of prophecy was that of the vision, in which the prophet saw depicted before his mental eye imagery or scenes of various kinds, which he described and probably interpreted to the people. We have a striking illustration of this kind of prophecy in the case of Balaam, and it is evident from the brief story of his remarkable visions that the people of that far-off era were quite familiar with men of his class. Such men are found in India to-day, and have great power among the common people. Some are arrant impostors, a few are hypnotic subjects, while a very few seem to be trance-mediums, and when in the trance state "prophesy" at a rate which profoundly impresses those who see and hear them. In every age, from Balaam to Malachi, the false prophet seems to have been everywhere present as a rival, and usually as an opponent, of God's true messengers; but we need not for a moment wonder at this, when we remember that every great truth is sure to be counterfeited, and that nearly every great reform movement has given rise to false movements, professing loyal aims, but animated by an evil spirit. When we remember that false Messiahs appeared in such numbers in the era of the true Messiah, as to call

for special words of warning, and to become a source of serious public danger, we need not wonder that the office and work of a prophet has in all ages been subject to base counterfeiting.

The seer gradually gave way to the prophet, a man of like character, but whose gifts were more directly bestowed, who employed less imagery in his discourses, and who became more of a teacher and a minister in all that pertained to religious duties. Without avowing it, and without having public attention called to the fact, the Hebrew prophets at a very early period began to assume some of the functions of the Levitical priests. They became public teachers, and as they dealt freely with both public and private duties and obligations they almost invariably acquired political influence; but it is a very notable fact that they very rarely attempted to use the power which they possessed for purposes of personal promotion. The Hebrews regarded Samuel as the chief founder of the order, although they never lost sight of the fact that Moses had not only been a great statesman and military leader, but also in the most lofty sense of the word a prophet. The greatest of the prophets, however, was undoubtedly Elijah, a man of extraordinary character, who impressed himself profoundly upon his age, and during whose ministry so many pro-

phets were raised up that schools for their training were established, and they became a recognized class throughout the land. The prophet became a man of power, a man of both religious and political influence, and the prophetic gift became highly prized both as a mark of God's favour to the individual, and as an agency for working out God's just purposes among men. The prophet was one highly favoured of God, and his gift was valued above rubies.

The golden age of the Hebrew prophets had in a measure passed away, and the prophetic gift had become comparatively rare, when the prophet Joel made his appearance as God's spokesman among the people. No doubt those who knew of the marvelous days of Elijah and Elisha often thought with deep regret of that era of power, and wondered if such a time would ever come back to earth again. A great public affliction had fallen upon the land, and it was not a time in which to indulge hopes of brighter and better days; but the man of God, as the prophets of that era were always called, received a message of hope and comfort for the people. God would remember his heritage again. The corn and the wine and the oil were to be restored again; the fig-tree and the vine were to yield their strength; the early and the latter rain were to come in their ap-

pointed times, and plenty was to be restored to the land ; but more than these temporal blessings, above and beyond all temporal blessings, a time was to come when the prophetic gift would be given with amazing freedom to men and women of all classes. The sons and the daughters in the family, and the very servants in the household, were to become partakers of the gift which had made Elijah tower like an archangel among men, and Elisha move like a crowned king among princes. In some form, to some extent, all classes and all ages were to share in the wonderful gift. In the coming age of blessing the prophetic unction was to be bestowed upon the whole household of God's faithful servants.

We are all familiar with the story of the fulfillment of this prediction, but as we read the brief account of that memorable event, it does not at first occur to us that the anointed disciples all became prophets of Jehovah. Peter reminds us, perhaps, of Elijah, but the rest of the group have undergone little apparent change ; and yet each and every one of the hundred and twenty has been crowned with a tongue of flame, the outward token of the fact that each one has been endowed with a divine energy in speech which will give the words which flow from his lips a power to move human hearts and minds such as

he has never known before. But this power is invisible, and the prophetic gift has not made these disciples in outward appearance or manner resemble the Hebrew prophets of a bygone age. They have not been made counterparts of Elijah and Elisha, because they have received a higher commission, and are henceforth to engage in a holier ministry than those great heroes ever knew. They are to prophesy, and hence in a good and true sense are to become prophets; but their sphere had been assigned to them, and their ministry is to be one of great simplicity, patterned after that of their Master rather than that of Elijah.

While each disciple received a tongue of flame, we must remember that the measure of prophetic power granted to each one, was, and in every case ever is, determined by the will of Him who distributes all spiritual gifts according to his own infallible wisdom. Hence among the many who received the gift, a special dispensation was granted to a few, who soon became known as persons who prophesied. These were Christian prophets in a special sense, and they soon became recognized as such. The references in Luke's history to Agabus and the four daughters of Philip, the evangelist, afford us a familiar illustration of the manner in which this gift became recognized at an early period in the Church.

"If the New Testament prophets were, and are, more highly favoured than Elijah, and yet work no miracles, foretell no events, and add nothing to divine revelation, in what," it may be asked, "does their superiority consist?"

The prophet in the Church of Pentecost was able to proclaim a risen Christ, a privilege of which Elijah never dreamed. The great distinctive feature of New Testament prophecy is to bear an inspired testimony to the living Christ. Just before his ascension our Saviour had announced to his disciples that they were shortly to receive an anointing of power, and that their future mission among men was to be that of bearing testimony concerning him. They were acquainted with his teaching, and they were witnesses to the fact that he had risen from the dead, and was now a living and exalted Saviour. They were not only to proclaim this fact, but to bear testimony concerning him in the broadest sense of the word,—testimony concerning his character, his work, his mission among men in every era, his risen power, his works of love and mercy still performed all over the world, his hallowed companionship, his mighty salvation, his lordship over all the kingdoms of men,—these and an endless list of similar things were to constitute the points of testimony which the anointed disciples were to offer to the

world. We can thus well understand how it came to pass that Peter, as soon as he had received his tongue of living flame, began to bear witness to the resurrection, exaltation, and saving power of his lately crucified Master. The risen Christ was his theme, and Christ has been the theme since that eventful morning of every believer who has received the gift of prophecy. We can thus understand the full meaning of the language of the seer of Patmos—that prince of New Testament prophets—that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Few passages of scripture have been more misunderstood. Many have been the sermons preached from these words as a text, in which scores upon scores of Messianic predictions have been quoted, and their fulfillment narrated, by men who saw no meaning in the words, save that the ancient prophets had made predictions concerning Christ the most prominent feature of their discourses. But this is to give a very narrow meaning to a word which covers a very wide field.

It should never be forgotten that the tongue of flame was given to each disciple in the little assembly of Pentecost. No one was omitted. "It sat upon each of them." In some sense, and in some degree, however restricted in measure, every believer was made a partaker of the divine gift.

It is evident that all were not made partakers of all the gifts which were so freely distributed among the assembly, but the sweeping terms in which the gift of prophecy was spoken of certainly seems to imply that all received a measure of that priceless endowment. Certainly all needed it; for all were to become witnesses for Christ. Perhaps in the case of many the new gift meant little more than the power to bear testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ was alive from the dead; that he had power on earth to forgive sins; and that he lives to save for ever more. In every age this power is the great want of the Christian Church. The testimony of Jesus, not merely from the lips of authorized preachers, but borne by the great multitude of believers, is the real source of aggressive strength to the Universal Church. An anointed church will never be a dumb church. The Spirit which came upon the Master and moved him to speak the gracious words in the synagogue of Nazareth, moves every disciple, no matter how humble, to bear a like testimony. No matter how lowly the person, whether son or daughter, whether servant or handmaiden, the prophetic unction of Pentecost will put a joyous testimony in the heart and on the lips, and enable the witness to testify bravely and "with great power," as at first in the Church of Pentecost.

It is very possible that the reader may be ready to ask if the predictive element in prophecy is to be cast aside as of secondary importance, and possibly the thought may come to some that the old-time promises, especially concerning Christ, are in a measure discredited by the above view. No such thought has for a moment entered the mind of the writer. So far from it, the broader view of prophecy includes prediction, and excludes no element which was found in prophecy at the beginning. The grave mistake into which the popular misuse of the words prophet and prophecy has led most writers of the Bible, including commentators, is that of limiting the functions of the prophet simply to that of a foreteller of events. Instead of taking away any part of his functions, the object of these lines is to enlarge them, by bringing back to the words above quoted the full meaning which they bore in the days of King James.

We often hear of students of prophecy, but in most cases it will be found on examination that such students devote themselves almost exclusively to the examination of the predictive portions of the biblical prophecies, and the attempts to show how these predictions have been fulfilled, or are in the course of fulfillment. But surely this is not the proper way to study the broad subject

of prophecy. It is not a mysterious endowment of a few chosen men of the ancient world, but a living power in the world of to-day. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon believers throughout the entire Christian dispensation, and can best be studied as it is found in actual exercise among living disciples of Jesus Christ. Thousands of men and women now living enjoy and exercise the same gift which was known as prophecy in the Church of Pentecost, and it is among such Christian disciples that a student of prophecy should make his first researches. Is there such a gift? Is there any element of prophecy in any of the preaching which we hear at the present day? Is there any predictive element in it? Is there any element of inspiration in any modern writers? Did the Holy Spirit move or inspire Charles Wesley to write his immortal hymn,

"Jesus, lover of my soul"?

Or Toplady, to write,

"Rock of Ages cleft for me"?

These are questions of intense interest, and cannot fail to afford the sincere student abundant food for interesting inquiry and devout thought.

As to a predictive element in modern prophecy, I wish to say at once, without the slightest hesitation, that I believe implicitly that the Holy Spirit does in our day, at times and within limitations,

inspire certain disciples to see clearly and pourtray accurately the outline of coming events. We have only to pay close attention to a speaker who is manifestly aided by the Holy Spirit, to notice how frequently he is led to speak with the utmost confidence of the outcome of questions still pending. He does not often, it is true, venture to pourtray great political events, such as the overturning of thrones, and revolutions among the nations, for the very good reason that God does not send him to deliver such messages; but when great moral questions are at issue, the voice of the Christian prophet is sure to be heard in the land. It is said that Abraham Lincoln, in his younger days, at a time when slavery was seldom denounced in public in the United States, was profoundly impressed by a sermon preached by Dr. Peter Akers, in which the overthrow of slavery was predicted in vivid and most positive terms. On his way home from the meeting where the sermon had been preached, Mr. Lincoln spoke of the deep impression made on him by the sermon, and added that he had received a remarkable conviction that in some way he would in after years have an important share in bringing about this great consummation. Here was a case where a prediction was appropriate, and where prophecy would have been incomplete without it, and while such notable illus-

trations may be rare, yet there is no scriptural or other reason why they should not occur as frequently as in ancient times.

In the more ordinary walks of life, and among the Christian workers of average grade, illustrations of the fulfillment of such predictions are much more common than is usually supposed. There can be no question about the fact that such predictions are made; the only doubt is as to their fulfillment. If personal testimony may be admitted here, I would say that my own observation, carried on through a number of years, has cleared my mind of all doubt on the subject. In one case I knew a missionary to write a letter giving an outline of a certain course of events which involved a party in an unknown quarter of the globe, and movements which required the co-operation of scores of individuals living in different places. The letter was soon forgotten, but after a few years it came to light again, when it was noted with surprise that the whole plan suggested had become history. Why should we not expect that God, who in ancient days inspired prophets to advocate the interests of his work among men, would in our day put it into the hearts of some of his anointed servants to do the same?

This phase of the general subject brings before us the broader question of the prophetic element

in preaching, but the discussion of this most important question must be reserved for another chapter.

In the meantime, before passing to the discussion of special phases of the general subject, I can hardly refrain from again expressing surprise at the narrow lines within which students of prophecy have usually pursued their investigations. In nine cases out of ten it is quietly assumed that prophecy, in the scriptural sense of the word, has vanished from the earth, while, as a matter of fact, it is still in operation among devout Christians all over the world, and is a greater power among men to-day than it has been in any past age. If one would understand the spirit or methods of God's anointed prophets, let him by all means begin his investigations among the living rather than the dead. Do those who prophesy to-day always understand the full import of their words? Do they ever hold up a mirror which reflects more than one object? Do they ever see two or more horizons blended into one? Do they ever fall into errors of fact not affecting the import of the special message which God sends through them? Are any of their number ever conscious that the afflatus of the Holy Spirit is upon them? and on the other hand, do they at other times deliver their message with great heaviness of spirit, and

without any special manifestation of divine aid, unless it be a conviction that God has sent them, and would have them speak and not hold their peace? The study of present day prophecy along such lines as these questions suggest, would probably lead to clearer views of ancient prophecy than could be found by any possible amount of research among the records of the dead.

Chapter X

PROPHET AND PREACHER

X

PROPHET AND PREACHER

At first sight it seems singular that among all the gifts with which the Church of Pentecost was so richly endowed, no mention is made of either preaching or prayer. It might perhaps be suggested that the gift of faith,—for faith is not only one of the graces, but also one of the gifts which came to believers with the baptism of Pentecost,—was intended to include prayer, but this can hardly have been intended. Prayer includes faith, but it can hardly be said that faith includes prayer. It would seem more probable that both were embraced in the more inclusive gift of prophecy. When Peter delivered his memorable sermon to the astonished people after the effusion of the Spirit, he really, and in the best sense of the word, prophesied ; and when the whole body of disciples, on hearing the report of the apostles after their return from arrest, broke out into joyous adoration and prayer, they also "prayed in the Spirit," and were spiritually aided precisely as believers were when prophesying. The prophet and the preacher, as they were known in the Church of Pentecost, were in many aspects of their work one and the same, and it is extremely doubtful if any one would have been inducted into

the office of preacher during the first generation of Christians unless he had been known among his brethren as a man on whom the prophetic unction rested in rich measure. And yet the two are not the same. The preacher will often have a wider sphere, and be entrusted with a greater variety of duties, than he whose life is wholly devoted to the exercise of his prophetic gift. The prophet is his spiritual kinsman, and the kinship should be apparent in many things, but especially in the exercise of the prophetic gift.

A preacher, like a prophet, should always be a man sent of God. He should have a specific call, and should go among his fellow-men as a messenger of Jesus Christ. He should be able to speak. The propriety of reading sermons is not in question here, but even if it be granted that the preacher may read a written sermon, he should none the less be able to speak to his fellow-men. Jesus could not have read his sermon on the Mount, and much less his wonderful sermon to the woman of Samaria; and the modern preacher will often, if he follow God's leading, be put in places where a manuscript would be useless. It may readily be granted that the spirit of prophecy, now as in ancient days, may rest upon a writer, and the written sermon may prove a message from God; but the preacher who so far loses his power of

speech as to be unable to speak to his fellow-men, will very soon lose whatever measure of prophetic unction the Holy Spirit may have bestowed upon him.

A messenger should always have a message to deliver, and a public speaker who appears before an audience in the character of a messenger of God, and yet who is not conscious of having any message entrusted to him, occupies an utterly false position. Like the ancient prophets of Israel, the preacher-prophet of the present dispensation who is truly called and sent of God, is a man commissioned from on high to reprove and warn the wicked, to proclaim God's promises to the penitent and the obedient, to offer words of comfort to the sorrowing, to give light to those in darkness, to guide the weak and wandering, and, in short, to speak as if in God's stead to people of every class and of all ages. Nor is such a messenger of God to be silenced in reference to public questions. He must be a man of courage, and one who can, if need be, rebuke sin in high places. He is a watchman also, and should stand at his post like a faithful sentry, ever ready to sound an alarm when moral danger in any form threatens the people among whom he lives and labours. In all these points he is a true successor to God's anointed prophets of ancient times but in some

respects he is their superior. He has a gospel to proclaim, the fulness of which they never knew. He knows more of God, more of the spiritual life, more of divine truth, and more of the immortality which Christ brought to light than Eiijah could have understood, or Isaiah could have found language to describe. A man occupying such a position is among the highly favoured of earth, but his responsibility is correspondingly great. If he runs before he is sent, if he answers before he is called, or if, having a call, he fails to deliver his message, or to go to a modern Nineveh, he can only do so at the cost of becoming one of the most unfaithful of men.

The preacher who shares the gift of the prophet possesses a marvelous advantage in being able to bring into play what might be called the discovering power of prophecy. The word of God, when spoken by lips which have been touched by the living coal, becomes like a mirror which reflects to those to which it is presented not only their character, but often many things which they have supposed were hidden from the world. This peculiarity of the prophetic gift is very strikingly illustrated in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians (xiv. 24-25.) "But if all prophesy, and there comes in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and

thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on this face he will worship God, and report that God is among you of a truth." There is nothing fanciful, or in the slightest degree figurative in this language. Illustrations of this power are occurring every day. Anointed preachers of the word often become quite familiar with the fact that when preaching to strangers they are apt to be accused of indulging in personalities. The friends of those who are startled by what they regard as personal references, are frequently accused of having acted as tale-bearers, and no protestations avail to clear them from the charge.—"Somebody must have told the preacher; no one else knew, and you must have been the one who revealed the facts to him";—accusations of this kind are very common in connection with the work of some preachers.

Dr. Finney, an evangelist of the last generation, and a man of singular power, was once invited to preach in a certain neighbourhood by a stranger of whom he knew nothing. He asked no questions about the place or the people to whom he was to preach. When he reached the place of worship, he found the whole community present, and was strangely led to select for his text the story of Lot and his escape from Sodom. When he announced his subject he noticed that

the people seemed annoyed, and as he proceeded to describe the condition of a town which contained only one good man, the look of annoyance changed to one of anger and menace. He kept on, and before he closed a spirit of alarm and deep contrition fell upon the people, and many of them gave their hearts to God and found peace in believing. After the meeting Dr. Finney learned to his surprise that the people of that settlement had been utterly godless; that the man who had come to invite him was the only God-fearing man among them, and that in that region the settlement had become known as Sodom, while the one godly man had become popularly known by the name of Lot. The stranger accurately described the situation, although absolutely ignorant of the facts, and the truthfulness of his description served first to exasperate, and next to awaken, a convicted people. Page after page might be filled with similar illustrations of this discovering power in Christian prophecy, and it need hardly be added that the possession of such a gift is a source of marvelous power to one who speaks in the name of Jesus Christ.

It is but too probable that the most conspicuous element of weakness in the preaching of the present day, is found in the absence of the prophetic element. Men are often seen in the pulpit who

have no idea of a call from God, and who do not dream of such a thing as being sent with a message which they are to deliver with all fidelity. A supposed successor of Elijah is seen in the pulpit at the hour of service reading a criticism on one of the poets; another discourses on sociology, without understanding more than the alphabet of his subject; a third dabbles in politics; a fourth reads a dry essay on some speculative topic; a fifth expounds with elaborate proofs some scriptural doctrine concerning which no one of his hearers entertains any doubt; a sixth repeats a series of moral platitudes, while others try to imitate the arts of rhetoricians, actors, or even buffoons. Comparatively few speak with the voice or moral tone of an anointed prophet. Instead of inspiring public opinion, they follow it. In times of public excitement it is sometimes humiliating to see how eagerly the occupants of many pulpits seem to compete for favour by following where they ought to lead, and applauding when applause is cheap, or possibly wrong. The feeble and often foolish topics which are sometimes found among the pulpit notices in Saturday evening papers, are humiliating, if not positively wicked. Even the false prophets of Israel could hardly have been expected so far to forget their profession, or their personal dignity, as to condescend to some of the

expedients to which some modern preachers resort in the desperate hope of securing a deceptive and worthless popularity. No man is worthy of the name of preacher who does not select his pulpit themes under what he believes to be the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and men who are led by such conviction will never forget what is due to their own personal dignity, to say nothing of the reverence due to such a ministry.

The help of the Holy Spirit in prayer is twofold. In the first place the Spirit helps our infirmities, such as infirmities of knowledge, of judgment, or of faith. We do not rightly understand our own wants. We are not able to tell how our wants can be best supplied, and we are as dependent for help from God in such matters as little children are for the directing care of their parents. But the Spirit does more than direct our thoughts and kindle holy thoughts within us when we pray. He blends his own prayer with ours, making intercession not only for, but with us, when we pray. The same Spirit who anoints disciples to preach, anoints them to pray, and as with the preacher so with the suppliant in prayer, a special anointing is given in some cases not differing essentially from the prophetic unction. Christians who are thus anointed are often met with, and in some cases are persons of extraordinary spiritual

power. At times God gives a special blessing to efforts made by Christian men and women who depend almost wholly upon prayer in their efforts to awake slumbering souls and lead them to Christ. Years ago a "praying band" of laymen became widely known in New York and adjacent places for their efforts in meetings where prayer was used almost exclusively as the weapon both of offence and defence. The great revival of 1857 in the United States, which a year or two later reached Ireland and Scotland, differed from similar movements chiefly in the fact that it began and was sustained, not by preachers or preaching, but by laymen and prayer.

Some years ago, in a small country village, a few Christian disciples felt moved to put forth special efforts for a revival, but they could not obtain the services of a preacher to lead them, and to preach to them at the proposed meeting. They used every possible effort to get help, but failed, and when the time fixed for the special services arrived they were sorely perplexed. No one of their number had even in a moderate degree the gift of speech; nor were they gifted in song. In utter helplessness they decided to meet together in the evenings for prayer, and to their own utter amazement their simple prayers were attended by greater power, and produced greater and more

lasting results, than any preaching which had ever been heard in the village. As with these disciples, so has it happened with many others. Anointed prayer is, as from the beginning God intended it should be, an agency of mighty power which no Church can neglect without peril to its best spiritual interests.

Sacred song, like prayer, is not only what is called a "means of grace," but is used by the Holy Spirit as a medium through which deep and lasting impressions are made upon human hearts and minds. In the very brief history of the Church of Pentecost which has come down to us, we find no reference to singing, but on the eve of the new era we read of Jesus and his disciples singing a hymn, and in the very earliest days of Christianity the disciples were accustomed to use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in their religious services. With very few exceptions all spiritually minded Christians, from Pentecost down to the present day, have in this matter followed the example of the pioneers of early Christianity. As a matter of fact, an outpouring of the Spirit upon believers in any part of the world in our own day may be expected invariably to cause an outburst of song, usually of a joyous character, and also in most cases varied, as in primitive times, so as to include psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Ex-

plain it as we may, the fact is patent to the world that the Holy Spirit not only inspires and blesses this kind of singing, but that it is attended by a peculiar spiritual power so nearly akin to that which marks the anointing of the Spirit in preaching and prayer, as hardly to be distinguishable from it. In other words, it is subject to the prophetic afflatus, and must be considered in connection with God's prophecy in the broadest sense of the term.

When Bishop Taylor was preaching as an evangelist among the Zulus of South Africa, nearly thirty years ago, he stood in the pulpit on a certain occasion and sang a popular hymn known as the "Eden Above." A Zulu interpreter who stood beside him had been requested to give the people at the close of each stanza a brief outline of its meaning, but instead of doing this he turned the words into Zulu verse, and actually sang each stanza to the proper tune, and in doing so made a profound impression upon the people. When asked afterward how he had managed to make a metrical translation, and to sing it without a moment's pause or hesitation, he expressed surprise, and did not seem to be aware that he had either turned the words into Zulu verse or sung them when thus arranged. This very singular phenomenon may be viewed in various ways, but

the notable thing about it was the fact that God wonderfully blessed him, and this is the notable element in all spiritual singing. Nothing is more clearly established by the experience of thousands of Christian workers than that God mightily uses the voices of singing, with or without instrumental aids, provided the singing is "in the Spirit," and used as a means of glorifying God.

But just here dangers confront us. The power of solo singing, first introduced chiefly by the late Philip Phillips, and afterward popularized throughout the world by Mr. Sankey, came to many as a new discovery, and was eagerly adopted in city and in country. But very soon a sad deterioration became apparent. Shallow sentiment began to take the place of noble thought and hallowed feeling. The "trundle-bed," and other sentimental relics, were introduced into Christian worship, while the robust songs of the best Christian poets were thrust aside to make way for feeble, if not meaningless, rhymes about "bright rafters" and "golden hereafters," the use of which in Christian churches is little short of an abomination. Nor does the evil end here. From coarse doggerel it is often only a step to refined platitudes, or perhaps unmeaning words put together for the sake of the music. Christian worship ceases to be Christian when it fails to keep within the range of

the understanding, and this is the character of too much of the music heard in Christian sanctuaries. Is it ever right to spend any part of the precious hour of public worship listening to a violin solo? And, if not right in the case of any one instrument, is it right in the case of any? Is mere music worship? Has a single instance ever been known or heard of in which God vouchsafed a blessing upon such music in connection with divine worship?

The Christian preacher may be expected to share with his fellow mortals, in at least an average measure, the various infirmities to wich we are all subject; but if he would wear a prophet's mantle, he must cherish two special virtues at every cost. In the first place he must be true. It is not enough that the man who occupies a pulpit should speak the truth; he must be a true man. The lips of mortals are the index of the heart, and no man's heart is any more pure than his lips. God desires truth, not only upon the lips, but "in the inward parts." The most seraphic of the ancient prophets was not fully prepared for his ministry until a seraph's hand had touched his unclean lips with a hallowed coal from the altar of heaven; and the lips of the modern prophet must be touched by a coal from the same altar. Both heart and lips must be true. The Holy Spirit will not

entrust a sacred truth or a divine message to a man of unclean lips whose heart is not true.

In like manner the preacher-prophet must be a man of courage. If God speaks through him, the message will sometimes be of such a character as to cause more frowns than smiles, and unless the speaker is a man of courage, he will not be able to deliver his message with the fidelity which his position demands. It does not by any means follow that all those who are called to this responsible service are constitutionally men of exceptional courage. So far from it, courage would seem to be one of the special gifts of the anointing Spirit who not only sends forth the messenger, but prepares him for his difficult task. Peter does not appear to have been originally a man of much courage, either physical or moral; but when on the morning of Pentecost the Spirit came upon him, he stood before the assembled multitude and spoke like a man incapable of fear, and as often as he appeared in public animated by the same Spirit, his courage maintained the same lofty character. The anointing of the Spirit in our own day can in like manner make timid men brave, and thus enable them to be true to their calling, and a preacher who is not willing to be entrusted with a lofty courage,—a courage which will dare all things, need not pray for the anointing which makes the

occupant of a pulpit both a preacher and a prophet.

When Moses was leading the Hebrews through the wilderness, a very peculiar incident in connection with the exercise of the prophetic gift occurred. At a critical point in the history of the people the Holy Spirit came upon the seventy elders, and clothed them with the same prophetic power which before had been the gift of Moses alone, and they at once began to exercise their new gift, "and did not cease". It so happened, however, that two of their number, named Eldad and Medad, were without in the camp; but the Spirit came upon them as upon the others, and they also prophesied. This at once created alarm and opposition, and the youthful and impatient Joshua hastened to beg Moses to put a stop to the two irregulars. It did not occur to Joshua, as it does not occur to the many in our day who are always ready to repeat his error, that in finding fault with the two men he was really finding fault with the Spirit who was inspiring them. They were certainly not to blame for the fact that the Spirit of prophecy had been given them, and Moses was true to his own noble character when he assured Joshua that, so far from forbidding them, he would to God that all the people might receive the Spirit in like measure, and "become prophets," even as had happened to these two.

The jealousy, or fear, or distrust, which many occupants of pulpits manifest towards those who begin to prophesy outside the modern tabernacle enclosures, is perfectly natural and not always culpable, but the only question involved in such cases is one of facts. Does God, who never allows his prerogative to be questioned, move the irregular men or not? If he sees that the men in the pulpits have lost the spirit of their calling, or that they are too few for their gigantic task, or if they are hedged about so as to be inaccessible to the people, he will not hesitate, and in the past has never hesitated, to raise up a new generation of men and women fitted for the work which needs to be done. When Mr. Wesley heard that some of his lay followers were prophesying in the open air, he was startled, and resolved to put a stop to the irregularity; but he soon saw that the hand of God was with the irregular preachers, and having seen the grace of God he rejoiced thereat, and in the course of time became the leader of a great host of such men. But in due time the lay preachers were found in pulpits, and a generation or two later their successors were often found repeating the error of those who had tried to suppress the preachers of Wesley's day. It is to be hoped that intelligent Christians are at last beginning to understand that the successors of Eldad

and Medad can never be suppressed, and will never again be found in a minority. The world is without the tabernacle, and will not come in. The prophets and preachers must go forth to them, and in the history of the two irregulars in the camp we may see an intimation of the order which was to be observed in the Christian era, when prophecy was to become a common inheritance of multitudes of believers.

The vexed question of the right or propriety of women exercising the prophetic gift calls for only a brief word here. The prophet Joel certainly predicted that the daughters should prophesy; the daughters of Philip the evangelist did prophesy; and from the discussion of the question in the First Epistle to the Corinthians it is made abundantly evident that women were accustomed to exercise this gift, and that the apostle not only tolerated, but directly sanctioned the public exercise of both prophesying and praying on the part of Christian women. The question is happily settling itself, and it seems highly probable that before many years it will cease to be a subject of serious controversy.

Chapter XI

PASTORS AND TEACHERS

XI

PASTORS AND TEACHERS

"And he gave some pastors and teachers."

Eph. iv. 16.

"Warning every man and teaching every man.

Col. i. 28.

"Take heed therefore unto yourself, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God."

Acts xx. 28.

"He said unto him the third time, ... feed my sheep."

John xxi. 17.

The two offices of pastor and teacher have so much in common, and are so linked together in the New Testament, that it seems appropriate to speak of the two corresponding gifts in the same connection. The two terms, pastor and teacher, are at times apparently used interchangeably by New Testament writers, and yet in the main they represent two different kinds of work, each of which calls for peculiar qualifications. Both terms are of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, and hence the Christians of Pentecost, as well as the early Hebrew Christians generally, did not need to have the duties of either office defined, but they simply applied on a broader and more enlightened basis the policy with which they had been familiar as Jews, to their new conditions as Christians.

Let us first speak of the term pastor. The Christian pastor was practically a spiritual shepherd, one whose duty it was to guide, protect, feed, and care for the members of the flock entrusted to his care. Without any exception all new disciples need this kind of care as individuals, while the flock as a whole needs wise and faithful shepherding, day by day and year by year. The most cultured men of society, men of strong character and accustomed to leadership, are but babes in knowledge and experience when they first receive Christ as a personal Saviour, and they need to be led tenderly day by day, and fed with the pure milk of the divine word. All classes need kindly oversight such as this, and our Saviour made special provision for it. His solemn injunction to Peter, thrice repeated, was really spoken to every one, in every age, to whom is entrusted the care of immortal souls. Grievous wolves prowl around our modern churches as their ancestors did in New Testament times. The wolf nature is not changed with the lapse of the centuries. The foes of the Christian flock come to kill and to destroy, not simply to debate and criticise. Those who by any art, or device, lead a Christian disciple away from Christ, really destroy that soul. Such an act means this, and can never mean less than this, and the Christian pastor should be a man

who can appreciate such a peril, and who will spare no effort to protect the most feeble lamb.

A Christian pastor should know his flock, and identify himself with them in every possible way. He should know them as individuals, and he should know them in their family relationships. He should be much among them, his face should be a familiar object, and his very footstep should be a familiar sound on every threshold. In no other way can he know his people, and, what is equally important, in no other way can he be known by them. He should know their personal anxieties, and be able to enter freely into their joys and sorrows. Above all he should know the spiritual standing of each one, and be able to decide wisely and act promptly in times of special personal emergency.

It is to be feared that a fashion is growing up among men who aspire to pulpit prominence, to stipulate before accepting the pastorate, so called, of a given church, that they shall not be required to go among the people, or, in other words, that they shall not be expected to perform pastoral duties. There may be, no doubt, exceptional circumstances which would justify such an agreement, but such circumstances should be exceptional indeed. A man who cannot do the proper work of a pastor should, as a general rule, seek

for his legitimate work in some other calling. He may deliver able pulpit addresses while holding himself aloof from his people, but he cannot minister to their wants, cannot give them the preaching they need, and in short cannot serve them as a spiritual guide in any proper sense whatever.

On the other hand the preacher who goes among his people, who lives in touch with them, who learns how to enter into their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, will keep himself in touch with humanity at large, and his preaching will have a freshness and power which can come from no other source. A man who is not personally brought into contact with the great throbbing heart of the living humanity around him, cannot be a Christian preacher in the best sense of the word. Successful preachers have been known to say that they usually find their "best texts"—those which bring them nearest the hearts of their hearers—while out among their people, on the street, or in private homes.

The neglect of personal duty by too many of our modern pastors is positively startling. Very recently a faithful man on assuming charge of a new congregation, found it necessary to remove more than one thousand names from the roll of membership, because they represented persons of

whom no trace could be found. Whether these unknown persons were living or dead, whether on earth or in heaven, or elsewhere, no one had taken the pains to ascertain. How the pastor or pastors who had allowed such a record to stand in the church register could have obeyed the demand to "teach every man," it would be difficult to determine.

"But can not pastoral work be done by proxy? Can not an assistant be employed to do it? or, better still, can not one or more deaconesses be secured for this purpose?"

An assistant or a deaconess can do much, but the point must never be overlooked that the man who is responsible both for the preaching and the general care of the flock, needs a personal share in the work quite as much as the work needs him. He can not do successful work in any other way. The most faithful subordinates can not wholly relieve him of this duty. They may save his church from failure or serious loss, but they can not save the man himself from becoming a failure. Pulpit popularity is an extremely doubtful evidence of successful work. Not a few churches have been known to dwindle away in a few years into mere skeletons of organizations, while all the time encouraged by the sight of overflowing congregations on Sunday. The members are deceived,

and in most cases the preacher himself is deceived, by the mere fact that people come out in crowds to hear the preaching. But what good can result if it is all the time apparent that they only hear him, but never really give heed to his word? Between hearing and heeding there is in this case simply the difference between success and blank failure.

If now we turn our attention to the office and work of the New Testament teacher, we should first of all divest our minds of the idea that the terms *teacher* and *teaching* are to be employed in the modern sense of those words. For instance, the teaching in question is not such as is usually given in Sunday-school, nor is it a course of catechetical instruction of any kind. It may include the instruction of children, but is by no means to be confined to the little ones. It has only an indirect reference to theological science, and it rarely concerns itself with questions of orthodoxy. It is based upon a recognition of the fact that men and women of all ages and grades of culture undergo a radical change of character when they become united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that one of the first marked features of this change is the reception of a teachable disposition. They become "as little children," and like little children they have not only received a teachable

disposition, but have also inherited, like all children, an eager desire to learn all about the new way into which their feet have been guided. New questions are constantly on their lips, and new longings spring up in their hearts, and the one who can best deal with those questions, and at the same time wisely and gently lead inquirers into green pastures and beside still waters, will succeed in fulfilling at once the double work of teacher and pastor.

Aquila and Priscilla, the devoted and enlightened husband and wife who taught the gifted Apollos "the way of God more perfectly," were noble examples of New Testament teachers, and many such are to be found in our best Christian circles at the present time. No class of workers is more valuable, and we can not pray too importunately that their number may be greatly increased. In the Church of Pentecost the apostles themselves did not shrink from this kind of work, and evidently they found enough of it to employ their best energies. Of the first converts it is written that they "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching," (R. V.), and we can easily imagine how many and how varied were their questions, and how eager the inquirers must have been.

The lessons which the young, whether in years or in experience, need to learn, can never be

reduced to system, or taught according to recognized methods. Each disciple has his own difficulties, and the lessons which suit the case of one person, may be wholly unsuited to that of his brother or nearest friend. Hence teaching must be personal, but never can be formulated. This suggests at once the necessity for a great host of teachers. New disciples must be placed under the watchful care of those who can help them in their difficulties, and ever be ready to expound the way of God to them more perfectly. To succeed in a service of this kind the teacher must possess both skill and tact of a high order, and must himself have sat often and long at the Master's feet, and learned deep spiritual lessons of him who is meek and lowly in heart. The meek are apt to make good teachers, probably because such persons are themselves teachable.

The teacher should have a good knowledge of character. This can be acquired to some extent by observation and study, but to many it seems to be almost intuitive. He should further have a wide and accurate knowledge of the many phases which spiritual experiences assume. He should, for instance, be able to distinguish between emotional feeling and the deep and genuine exercises which attend the operations of the Spirit in a believer's heart. He should have a thorough

knowledge of the nature of temptation, and of the many phases which it assumes, especially in the case of young and inexperienced disciples. He should in short be a modern Great-heart, one who can teach all the lessons which need to be learned along the pilgrim way from earth to heaven, and not only teach and interpret, but also guide in times of doubt, and defend in times of danger.

The teaching gift is by no means confined to a single class of workers. It is needed in every sphere of Christian labour, and is worthy to be coveted by all. It is an element of power in the pulpit, it is invaluable to the evangelist, is essential to the pastor, and is very often exercised with rare power by persons who occupy no special position of any kind in the Christian community. It is not restricted to sex or condition in life. Some of the most successful spiritual teachers to be found on earth are men and women living in mud huts, without culture, without more than the most elementary knowledge, without social influence even among the poorest, and yet possessing a knowledge of God, and an accurate acquaintance with the thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears of the poor creatures around them, which enables them to lead lives of rare usefulness among a people who but for them would have no earthly helper whatever.

This reference to the humble poor living among the surging millions of the heathen world, suggests the magnitude of the demand for anointed teachers which exists in the Church of the present day. Jesus left behind him a commission to his servants to disciple all the nations of earth, and lest this command might be construed into a mere perfunctory order to administer baptism to converts, it was expressly added that those baptised should be carefully taught in respect to all the duties and privileges which belong to them as disciples of Christ. Experience, sometimes of a painful kind, has convinced many missionaries that without this teaching baptism in most cases becomes to the ignorant masses in non-Christian lands not only an empty rite, but in many cases a positive injury. In fact, Christian baptism is based on the supposition that in every case it is to be followed by careful instruction. The two duties go together, and the one without the other is necessarily incomplete.

If this be true, what countless hosts of anointed teachers will be needed, before our world can be really, and in any proper sense, converted to God and made a Christian world. Millions upon millions of men and women, chosen of God and anointed for this special service, must be found and enlisted for this stupendous task. It is idle

to talk or think of ordained ministers for such an emergency, or to propose to remit the task to Sunday-shool teachers, or to select bands of special church workers, or to rely upon any other limited agency such as has thus far appeared in any part of the Christian world. One resource, and only one, is available for such a crisis, and that is a general anointing of whole churches, such as came upon each of the assembled brethren and sisters on the ever-memorable Pentecostal morning. When the remarkable exception becomes the general rule, when an anointed church keeps equal pace with a repenting and believing world, then, and only then, may we hope to see such a scene of universal teaching as the emergency of a penitent world must call for.

In many, very many, modern churches there is a painful lack of the teaching gift, both in the pulpit and in the pew. If an awakened and deeply anxious person were to drop in at some ordinary service and ask pastor and people to direct him into the way of life, it might be easy enough to quote a passage of scripture to the stranger, but the deep questionings of the human heart are not satisfied by a formal quotation, even from the Bible. The case would have to be dealt with intelligently, according to the peculiar conditions involved, and in hundreds of churches neither the

man in the pulpit nor the men in the pews would have ever met with an incident of the kind, nor would they know what to say or do. The most marked feature of the situation would probably be the awkward embarrassment which it would occasion ; but whatever course events might take, the painful outcome would be a lamentable inability to deal with the case.

If it be objected that such an emergency, or in plainer words, such a breach of church propriety, is most unlikely to occur, it may be said in reply that the writer has witnessed an incident of this very kind, the only difference being that a dozen men eagerly responded to the request made by the inquirer. Another more striking illustration might be cited of a prominent citizen in a western city who rose in his place at a Sunday morning service, walked down the aisle, and, facing about asked the people to pray for him, and help him to find the way of salvation. But why need we seek for exceptional cases of this kind ? In the way of precedent we need seek no further than Pentecost itself. After Peter's extraordinary sermon, the startled and awakened people did not appeal to the preacher in particular, but to the whole body of believers :—"Men and brethren, what shall we do ?" was the cry of the awakened throng. It is impossible that the whole body of converts, three

thousand in number, could have been dealt with by Peter alone. Their spontaneous inquiry, and all the circumstances which surrounded them, make it practically certain that the whole hundred and twenty anointed disciples spent a busy day in teaching eager people who pressed around them, and in personally applying the great truths which the spokesman of the company had proclaimed in his address.

It is in this direct, practical and personal kind of work, the dealing of mind with mind and heart with heart, that the church of the present day is conspicuously weak. A thousand or ten thousand exceptions do not disprove the assertion or materially lessen its gravity. We should be ever grateful for every trace of this divine presence which can be found in the modern church, but surely it is but just to ask how far our best congregations have advanced toward the standard set up in the Church of Pentecost. Where is the congregation of which it can be said that every member is able to teach transgressors the way of life? Where is the modern assembly, large or small, in which every one present is prepared to enter upon such a scene as occurred at the inauguration of the first Christian church?

It was said of an officer in the American civil war that nothing so disgusted him as to find an

incompetent surgeon blundering in his work among the wounded on the battle field. But how much better is the spiritual surgeon, who has never bound up a wounded heart in his life, who knows little or nothing of the wounds which sin makes in the soul, who has no intelligible idea of how he is to go to work, or what his duties are, amid the perils of the great moral battlefields of his generation? If any man on earth needs to have thorough knowledge and refined skill in the exercise of his profession, it is the man who works in the name of Jesus Christ, who deals with immortal interests, and who co-operates with the mighty forces and undeviating laws of the spiritual realm.

It is often said of young persons of both sexes going out as medical missionaries to foreign lands, that they should be required to spend at least a year or two in hospital practice before going abroad. A thorough and accurate knowledge of medicine is not sufficient for such persons. They need the advantages of personal experience in actual medical practice, and without this they will labour at a great disadvantage when living and working alone in distant lands. A year or two spent in a large hospital will give them opportunities for seeing the actual treatment of patients suffering from all manner of diseases, and

in after life they will find the lessons learned in this way of the utmost practical value.

Is not a practical training, corresponding to this hospital training, needed by our modern graduates from theological schools? It is not enough to learn how to preach, or how to acquire skill in the management of a church; the knowledge and skill which is above all value to a young minister is that which will enable him to deal faithfully and successfully with those vital questions on which depend the highest interests of the individual, both in this world and in that which is to come. Practice in preaching is often provided for the young student, but this is clearly and glaringly insufficient. The training of all Christian workers, not excepting preachers, should be practical in the fullest sense of the word, and the man who stands in the pulpit should be able to act as leader to all who are associated with him as labourers in the common vineyard.

Chapter XII

THE APOSTLE AND HIS SUCCESSORS

XII

THE APOSTLE AND HIS SUCCESSORS

"And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."

Luke vi. 6.

"Ye are of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

Ephesians ii. 19, 20.

"And he gave some, apostles."

Ephesians iv. 11.

In the minds of many intelligent Christians the word "apostle" stands merely as a title belonging to the twelve favoured men who were chosen by our Saviour as his immediate associates, and who in a special sense were to be his witnesses after his earthly ministry should be finished. In the minds of others the word stands not only as the title of the twelve chosen associates of our Lord, but as in an important sense pertaining to their official successors down to the present day. In the New Testament, however, we find the word used in a wider and much more practical sense than either of these distinctions would imply. As was pointed out in a previous chapter, the apostolic gift was distinctly recognized as among the endowments of Pentecost, and we find no more reason to regard this gift as transient, or as confined to twelve persons only, than for assuming that the prophets and teachers of the New Testa-

ment era were the first and last representatives of their order. Nor do we find any shadow of reason to assume that that the rich spiritual gift of the original Pentecost was ever to give place to an ecclesiastical office, carrying with it no spiritual power and, apparently, in a vast majority of cases, no spiritual grace.

It was perhaps but natural that the bereaved eleven should at an early day take steps to fill the vacancy caused by the defection and death of Judas; but if the Master had intended that a successor should be chosen, he would no doubt have made the selection himself, either before his death, or between his resurrection and ascension. The lot fell upon Matthias; and he took his place among the apostles, but here his name disappears from history. When Peter preached he seems to have been one of the eleven who stood around him, and in another instance we read of certain action of the twelve; but the position of Matthias seems to have been merely formal and official. The office and work of the apostolate, however, was not to be confined to these twelve persons. A new and fuller meaning was to be put into the word by the calling and endowment with apostolic gifts of one who had never been chosen of men for his illustrious office. In due time Paul appeared upon the stage of action in that extra-

ordinary era, "an apostle; not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father," who speedily vindicated his claim to his high office by showing "all the signs of an apostle." In other words, God, who had called him to this special ministry, was with him everywhere, and gave him such a measure of success, and clothed his words with such wisdom and power, that he was abundantly able to maintain his position in the face of all manner of hostile opposition. He became an apostle of Jesus Christ in the best and fullest sense of the word, and thus in the most practical way put an end to the notion that the office was limited to twelve persons.

The idea that all apostolic functions have been formally transmitted from generation to generation through a line of official successors, and that certain men in certain churches are thus made the true successors of the original twelve apostles, is so unsupported by facts, not to say contradicted by facts, that it is one of the strangest of marvels that intelligent men and women in our day can be persuaded to give it serious consideration even for a single hour. The decisive appeal of the greatest of apostles holds true in every age. Are "the signs of an apostle" found in these modern claimants, or are they wanting? All the authorities in Christendom cannot make a man an apostle unless

God puts his seal upon the individual; but when this seal is affixed, the signs of an apostle will not be wanting. As a matter of fact, however, the shadowy claim which is set up for many high officials at the present day is unsupported by any single fact which would have had any weight among the members of the Church of Pentecost. First of all, such claimants usually begin by disowning whole hosts of Christian brethren, and in the name of unity erect a Chinese wall of exclusivism against all comers. In the next place, with rare exceptions, they ignore the scriptural test of apostolic gifts, as well as apostolic deeds. If they really possess any gift pertaining to inheritors of so high a calling, it ought certainly to be manifested in some way. As has been said in another chapter concerning the illumination of the inspired word, the question is one of facts, and in this practical age such questions are more and more subjected to this supreme test. What power, what gift, what "sign," do these men who lay claim to so high a spiritual lineage, possess above their brethren?

When Jesus selected his twelve disciples, and gave them the title of apostles, he no doubt did so for several reasons. First of all, he needed their personal assistance, and wished to have them in close personal association with himself.

It has from time immemorial been the oriental custom for religious teachers thus to associate with themselves a few selected and trusted disciples. Next, the testimony of these men would be needed at a later day, and further the men themselves would be needed as founders and as administrators of the Church which was to be formed after the ascension. In selecting and instructing these men our Saviour was thus making provision for the urgent wants of coming years. He could foresee as others could not, that at no distant day not only Judea, but all the Eastern world, would be dotted over with Christian churches, and for the work of organizing, indoctrinating, and administering the affairs of these congregations, these twelve chosen men, and others of like spirit, would be needed. The daily instruction which these men had received must have been invaluable, but it would not have sufficed had it not been for the anointing of Pentecost, an anointing which fully qualified each and every disciple for the special work to which the Holy Spirit assigned him. Hence the same Spirit which came upon the helpers, the teachers, and the other classes of workers, descended upon the apostles, sealed them anew for their office and work, and fully prepared them for the unknown tasks which lay before them. The apostle

thenceforth takes his permanent place in the Church of Christ, and is reckoned with the prophets as himself one of the gifts of the ascending Saviour to his militant Church.

The lapse of years has not lessened the need of apostles after the New Testament pattern, but on the other hand has greatly increased it. The ancient Roman Empire was not equal in population to some modern mission fields, and the open doors now set before the Church of Christ are such as no Christian of the first century could have anticipated, even in imagination. If ever the apostle of Pentecost was needed, he is called for to-day. The hour is one of supreme opportunity, and every class of workers represented in the Church of Pentecost will be required by the Universal Church of the twentieth century. Conspicuous among these workers must be the apostle. Already he is called for in a thousand fields, and these fields are daily growing wider, while still others are coming into view.

If these views are correct; if the apostle is a permanent character in a spiritual Church,—and if he will be more and more needed in the coming century, what manner of man ought he to be? What practical duties should be expected from him? What should be his sphere of labour? Should he have successors? And should these in

every age be like himself, not only in character, but in the duties assigned to them? Is a modern church without the apostolic gift to that extent defective, and ill prepared for aggressive and successful Christian effort?

In Mark's account of the call of the twelve, it is said that "He ordained twelve that they should be with him." The first apostles certainly enjoyed a supreme privilege in the fact that they had been chosen to be with their Master, and that they constantly enjoyed this privilege. The modern apostle must know what it is to share the same companionship. He must daily walk in hallowed association with the Master who has called him, and in whose name he goes about among his fellow men. He must be a holy man, and so constantly share the fellowship of his Lord, and so walk in his counsel, that all who know him will instinctively perceive the divine relationship which exists between the disciple and his Master.

Next, the apostle is one sent. When the title was first given to the twelve by our Saviour, it was no doubt with reference to their future life-work rather than their immediate duty. In one notable passage Christ himself is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," (Hebrews iv. 14), and this application of the title is quickly understood when we remember the words of Jesus in his

farewell prayer with his disciples—"As thou has sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John xvii. 18). The blessed Saviour had indeed been made heaven's apostle to mankind, and while it is true that every disciple is sent out into the world that he may in some way help his Master, yet to the one chosen to be an apostle, to bear this responsibility in a special sense, to be entrusted with a special mission, the word has a depth of meaning which but few Christians can understand. The man who ventures to think that Christ may have chosen him to be an apostle, must first of all, and before anything else is considered, settle the question of his commission—Has he been sent? Can he go forth on his mission as Christ came forth into this world? Can he leave all, give up all, and on the other hand can he take up all, carry the burdens, endure the hardships, and tread among the thorns where the path of duty will lead him? If he can, it will be well with him; but if not, he need not aspire to the apostolate, even in the most restricted sense of the word.

The apostle is a pioneer. He is not sent to take charge of well organized churches, or to reap in well tilled fields, but rather to go into the highways and hedges of the world. Jesus did not come into a righteous world, but to a race of perishing sinners.

The apostle of every age goes forth as a pioneer. He may possibly find his work in what are called Christian lands ; but if so, it is because he understands that in lands where the true Light shineth in purity and splendour, there is still darkness, deep, dense, and widespread, which comprehendeth it not. The whole world is full of opportunities for the pioneer, and happy is the Christian disciple who is sent by the Lord and Master of us all to trace a pathway across some desert, or hew a way through some forest, or venture across some trackless sea, in order to gain access to souls in helpless and hopeless bondage.

Tbe apostle is an evangelist. As has been remarked in a previous chapter, it often happens that the same individual is made the recipient of a rich endowment of spiritul gifts, and, as might have been expected, the apostle who goes forth as a pioneer must needs have the evangelistic gift as well as the apostolic, and, it might be added, the prophetic gift as well. The messenger who is sent forth among strangers must be properly accredited, and the apostle who would speak in the name of Him by whom he is sent, must in the very nature of the case be gifted with the peculiar power by which the Holy Spirit makes the word effectual. An apostle who is not anointed to preach, who cannot deliver in person the

message which God sends to the people, must inevitably fail to carry conviction to those who hear the word at his lips. He is not a man who simply discharges official functions, but must be a man of the people, a man who lives and moves among his fellow men, and who speaks in a tone which men can neither misunderstand nor disregard.

The apostle is a layer of foundations. In this respect he is more than an evangelist. Philip as an evangelist opened the way for Peter and John at Samaria, and the two apostles proceeded to put down foundations and organize the work on a permanent basis. Or, to use a more recent illustration, George Whitefield was an evangelist who did not possess the gift of organization, while John Wesley not only did the work of an evangelist, but put down stable foundations, and organized the work on an enduring basis. It is not to be supposed that the one man was better than the other, or that he was a more faithful worker, but merely that one possessed a gift which the other did not. The apostle, in every age, must be an organizer. He must assume charge of the work which springs up under his hand, and since organization is a law of life, he cannot provide for the best interests of the churches which he founds without providing them with the organization suited to the peculiar condition of the people.

The great Apostle to the Gentiles accepted it as a part of his mission among men to lay enduring foundations, on which to build enduring spiritual structures in his Master's name, and to his Master's glory. In doing this he illustrated the highest qualities of Christian workmanship. Work that abides is the work which is really valuable in every land and in every age.

The apostle is an administrator. In the very nature of the case he becomes a leader to the converts who gather around him, and, whether consciously or not, he will inevitably begin to exercise a certain measure of authority over them. It is as natural that he should do so, as it is proper and judicious. In the church, as in the family and the state, there must be government, and where there is government there must be authority. At the outset this authority may not be very accurately defined, which adds to the delicacy of the stranger's position ; but if he is wise,—and the anointed apostle must be assumed to have a share of wisdom,—he will be able to administer the affairs of the church, or, it may be, of a group of churches, with a fair measure of success. In any case the work of administration may be expected to form a very important part of his duties, and in many a field has the modern successor of the first apostle in Gentile lands been reminded of that

great man's plaintive reference to "that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches." (II Cor. xi. 28).

It sometimes, but not always, happens that the apostle devotes his life to the field to which he is sent; but when he quits his post, whether by death or by being sent to another field, it by no means follows that he is to have a successor of like character and authority. The modern Elijah seldom finds an Elisha to take up his mantle and carry on the work which he lays down. On the other hand his work as a pioneer and as an organizer is of such a nature that often no place is left for a successor. His responsibilities, too, may have become too varied and too burdensome to be carried longer by a single individual, and hence other men come to the front, and the work of the recent apostle is shared by them in such measure and in such ways as the providence of God and the wisdom of the Church may indicate. Paul, the great exemplar of the apostles of every age, left no successor behind him when called home from the field. No man in that age could have taken up his mantle, and it was no doubt better for all the interests of early Christianity that more permanent arrangements should have been made for the administration of the affairs of the churches. In our age and in every age a similar state of

things may be expected to prevail. The apostle does not ordinarily give place to a successor, but to many successors, although it rarely happens that any of these will share in full measure the apostolic gifts. These successors may share the spirit which animated the apostle whose achievements they inherit, and may prove themselves worthy of the responsibility which is placed upon them ; but whether prophets, pastors, or teachers, they come short of the peculiar endowment which in Pentecostal measure constitutes a Christian disciple an apostle of Jesus Christ.

"But as a matter of fact," it may be asked, "have we any apostles, in the New Testament sense of that word, living in the world to-day? Have there been any such during the century now closing? Or, indeed, have there been any during the Protestant era? Is the apostle of whom you speak an ideal character only, or at best a remote possibility?"

Most assuredly the Christian apostle has lived within the Protestant era, and lives to-day. Martin Luther had very many of the elements of the apostle in his character, and illustrated both the spirit and the work of an apostle in his career. John Knox has been called the "apostle of Scotland" with perfect truthfulness. David Brainerd has been called the apostle of the (American)

Indians, and was such as truly as Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles of his generation. It is very true that Brainerd's field was a narrow one; but the gifts and calling of an apostle are not limited to wide fields and vast populations. John Wesley was an apostle in calling, in labours, and in the spirit which animated him. William Carey was an apostle, as was Christian Frederick Schwartz, Adoniram Judson, Thomas Coke, Bishop Hannington, Francis Asbury, George Muller, Mackay of Uganda, and a score of other pioneers of the mission field. The over-shadowing fame of the great apostle Paul has created an impression, that only illustrious leaders of great movements can be classed among the apostles of Christ in any age. But this is a great mistake. Brainerd among the Indian wigwams, and the Moravian exiles among the ice-bound huts of Greenland, are noble examples to the contrary. It is not the magnitude of the task, but the genuineness of the call which ennobles one sent forth, in the name of Christ into strange lands, or among strange people.

Never before in Christian history has there been such a pressing demand for men of apostolic spirit, and having the apostolic calling, as at the present hour. A thousand tribes are to be rescued from paganism, brought to Christ, and transformed

into Christian communities ; a hundred kingdoms are to be won for the Lord our King, and vast multitudes are to receive the elements of a new spiritual and social life. Great spiritual empires are to be founded, and built up in all the essentials of a vigorous Christian civilization,—empires which are to become mighty agencies for renewing the face of the moral world. Nor is it in the far-off mission fields alone that the apostle is needed. Our so-called Christian lands need a mighty host of mighty men of God to grapple with great and growing evils, with invincible energy and determination. Ephesus had one Diana ; London has a dozen, and New York a score. Where are the men who are to startle and ultimately overthrow our modern Dianas ? Very many notable men and women are to be found among the Christian workers of our great cities ; but may it not be that apostolic leadership among them is a want not yet fully supplied ? The apostolic gift is another name for Christian statesmanship. Wisdom and skill in administration is one of the "signs" of the New Testament apostle. The Universal Church of this closing century sorely needs an order of statesmen equal to the emergencies of the hour. May God raise up and send forth such men, not only into distant mission fields, but to every critical point in the wide

earth, whether in heathen lands, or under the shadow of Christian sanctuaries in Europe and America.

Chapter XIII

THE FIRE UPON THE ALTAR

XIII

THE FIRE UPON THE ALTAR

When Moses, in obedience to God's command, had set up the tabernacle in the desert with its altar of sacrifice in front, we read that "there came a fire out from before the Lord" and consumed the offerings placed upon the altar. The preparation had all been made by human hands, but the fire was kindled by a divine power. God's part and man's part in the phenomenon could be distinctly perceived, and in the further order of the altar service the law of divine and human co-operation was very clearly illustrated. Of the sacred fire thus kindled on the altar it had already been written, "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." (Lev. vi. 13.) Every priest must have understood that while God had in the first place kindled the sacred flame, it had become his duty to join his brethren in keeping it alive. The divine omnipotence which had kindled the fire could not be depended on to co-operate with human indolence, especially in a service of such sacred import as this was understood to be.

Our ever present moral responsibility, so far as it affects the maintenance of spiritual life, is illus-

trated in a very striking manner by the obligation which was laid upon those ministering priests to replenish the altar fires. The fire upon the altar, and also the seven glowing lights of the golden candle-stick, were types of the Holy Spirit. The visible tongues of flame at Pentecost were abundantly sufficient to explain this symbolism, and to connect the type with the anti-type. God required the priests of the temple to guard the sacred fire with the most watchful care, and in like manner he requires the Christian believer, who in Christ becomes a member of a royal priesthood, to guard with "jealous care" the flame which is kindled upon the altar of his renewed heart.

As a painful matter of fact, it must be confessed that among even the more spiritually minded of modern Christians, it is extremely common to hear the sad confession, that the sacred fire which at first descended from heaven upon the altar of the heart, has in a large measure lost its divine glow. The contrast in this particular between the modern church and that of Pentecost is painfully striking. Among the favoured members of that illustrious Church it would seem to have been an exceptional thing to find any one in whose heart this fire did not burn with a steady glow; among modern churches on the other hand it is only in exceptional cases that we

meet those whose love to Christ is constant, whose communion with God is uninterrupted through long days and months and years, and whose light is like that of an unsetting sun. Surely there must be something defective in modern views of spiritual privilege, else this extraordinary contrast between the average spiritual standing of believers in the two eras would not be so conspicuous as it undoubtedly appears to be.

This contrast is perhaps not so much owing to any specific wrong teaching, as to a general impression among Christians everywhere that the standard of holy living in the Church of Pentecost was abnormal; that the age was exceptional; that a miraculous element entered into the life of the saints to an extent which is now unknown, and that only a favoured few in our age can hope to approach, even in limited measure, the privileges of those who witnessed the inauguration of the Christian church and the Christian religion. Of course this impression is wholly a mistaken one, but we must recognize it clearly, while pointing out to every inquirer a more excellent way than that which the multitude seems content to follow. There is and has ever been but one law of the spiritual life, but one standard of holy living, and this is the one which was illustrated in the purest era of the Christian faith.

The mistakes which are made by those who earnestly desire to keep the sacred fire burning on the altar are manifold, but probably the most frequent and persistent is that of supposing that the only way to replenish a waning fire is to invoke the descent of more fire upon the dying embers, whereas what is needed is not more fire, but more fuel. The merest child would understand this if entrusted with the ordinary duty of keeping a fire from going out, but intelligent believers seem to forget this altogether when watching, with perhaps the most intense solicitude, the waning flame and sinking embers on the altar which has been reared in their hearts. When the sacred flame first gleamed forth from the awful presence of Jehovah, and kindled a fire on the great altar of sacrifice, it found there not only the body of a victim, but the fuel which was necessary to make a permanent fire possible, and thenceforth it became the duty of the priests, not to seek for further manifestations of this mysterious flame, but to cherish and carefully guard the fire which had been kindled. Instead of being relieved of responsibility by the divine interposition, their personal responsibility had been very greatly increased.

As believers we all have an altar on which we are exhorted to present ourselves, not as "dead," like

the slain animals of the Jewish service, but as "living" and "reasonable" and "spiritual." (R.V.) This exhortation is of course expressed in figurative language, but its manifest meaning is that each believer should make a complete and unreserved consecration of himself to God, and, it need hardly be added, that the offering once presented must never be taken back. The slain animal on the Jewish altar was utterly consumed, but like the bush which Moses saw in the desert wrapped in flame and yet unconsumed, the Christian thus presented on the altar of his faith is robed in flame, but still lives on,—lives a new and divine life. But the condition which made a descent of the Spirit upon him possible, is absolutely necessary to the continuance of the holy flame. In other words, if the complete and abiding consecration of the entire being, body, soul and spirit, to God and his service is not carefully maintained, the fire upon the altar may certainly be expected either to burn low in its ashes, or go out altogether.

In his second epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul exhorts his young spiritual lieutenant to "stir up the gift" which was in him. The gift in question was no doubt the special anointing to preach, which had before been received through the Holy Spirit, but the illustration holds good in

the case of the Supreme Spirit himself, as the abiding Fire upon the altar. The fire which burns low soon begins to disappear among the white ashes, and if it is to be replenished the smouldering coals must be stirred up, the ashes removed, ventilation restored, and fuel added. Paul was a practical man as well as a great and wise teacher, and so instead of exhorting Timothy to pray mightily for a "fresh baptism" of the Spirit, instructed him how to comply with the conditions which would keep the fire upon the altar in a continual glow. In substance, he exhorted him not to trust in vanished blessings, not to be satisfied with past experience, not to let his heart become clogged with cares belonging to the past, but to commit himself anew to God and to maintain the consecration which he had once made, never to be recalled. X 232

Whatever is pleasing to God, whether in outward service or the disposition of the heart, may be regarded as a fitting object for presentation upon God's altar, and this is peculiarly true of anything upon which the Holy Spirit has put a special seal, such as prayer, or the word of God. The confession of the penitent writer of the fifty-first psalm lets in a flood of light upon this subject: "The sacrifices of God are a broken heart; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not

despise." A forgiven heart, even when most assured of God's mercy, is always pervaded with what might be termed a spirit of penitential love, and such love is worth infinitely more in God's sight than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. The heart which cherishes such a love will never be deserted by the Spirit. The more progress a true believer makes in the divine life, the more readily will he appreciate the spirit which prompted Paul in speaking of the mission of Jesus to save sinners, to add the words, "of whom I am chief." The Holy Spirit loves the heart in which such a love finds a dwelling place, and will not desert it.

A type of piety may sometimes be seen which is intense and energetic, but not sweet or affectionate. Bishop Thomson once applied the term "sour godliness" to this very exacting kind of religious life, and the term is none too harsh for the subject. The Holy Spirit cannot be expected to dwell in full measure in the heart of one who is not tender and loving, or of one who finds pleasure, or even interest, in remarking defects in the lives of others.

In a very special sense prayer may be regarded as an effectual means of maintaining the Spirit's presence in the heart. A chief object of the Spirit's ministry is that of helping us in prayer.

He helps our infirmities,—our infirmities of light, knowledge, and purpose. He blends his prayer with ours. Like the fragant incense, added in the vision of the seer of Patmos to the prayers of the saints, the smoke of which ascended up before God; so the ever blessed Spirit breathes his prayers into our own, in a blessed sense inspires our own, and thus gives us that power in prayer which prevails with God. Such being the special ministry of the Spirit to those who pray, it need hardly be added that the believer who neglects prayer, cannot do otherwise than grieve the Spirit more and more from his heart. The disciple who would walk in the Spirit must, absolutely must, be one who is much in prayer with God. He must know what it is to hold daily converse with his Maker, and to realize what is meant by the communion of the Holy Spirit.

As in the case of prayer, so as a general rule it may be observed that those who walk in the Spirit, and who retain the constant presence of the Spirit in the heart, are diligent students of God's word. Theories and inspiration must all alike give place to this most impressive fact. The Spirit does undoubtedly put vitality into the word, and those who walk in the light learn to love the word more and more. As remarked elsewhere, it does not follow that the Holy Spirit uses all

portions of the Bible alike, or any portion according to human dictation; but the significant fact for us to observe is that men and women on the altar of whose hearts the fire is ever burning, may always be observed to be persons much given to prayer and to searching the Scriptures. He who would keep this sacred fire from going out, must constantly bring to the altar in abundant measure both the inspired promises of God, and the prayer of faith which makes man both a partaker of the divine nature and a victor in the hour of spiritual wrestling with Omnipotence.

Some minds are so constituted that it is always a difficult task for them to maintain an even balance in determining the respective limits of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. In one person's view man can do nothing; in another's view he must do everything. Both of these extremists should be reminded that the law of divine and human co-operation is so comprehensive, that in all that affects the practical duties of life the one factor seldom, if ever, excludes the other. With life within the heart, and with life in the busy outer world, the rule is the same. In the individual heart and in the Church as a whole, God co-operates with believers, and the invisible flame of Pentecost will surely attend those who either wait or work in expect-

ation of the Spirit's coming, provided always, however, that the authority of the Spirit is not only recognized but obeyed. If, for instance Paul and his party had persisted in going into Bithynia when the Spirit suffered them not, we cannot believe any token of God's presence would have followed them. Man may command the fire from heaven, it is true, but only in obedience to divine law and divine authority.

Some twenty-five or more years ago an evangelist was blessed with extraordinary success in a remote mission field, not only among Christians, but also among the "raw heathen." Hearing of his success, some missionaries in another quarter of the globe were moved to send for the evangelist in the hope that he would be able to break the solid ranks of heathenism and open a way for a great work of salvation. The evangelist accepted the call from these brethren, and came with a calm confidence of success. "If the right conditions are complied with," he said, "the Holy Spirit will assuredly work here as elsewhere." But the expected results did not follow his preaching among the heathen. For a time it was thought that something must be lacking in the conditions required, but after many trials in different places and among heathen of different grades of culture, and after the most careful and

prayerful efforts had been made to see that no condition of success had been overlooked, it became evident to all concerned that for some reason they were not meeting with the success they had expected, or, indeed, with any success worth naming at all.

This incident is mentioned as an illustration of many similar failures which occur from time to time both in the home land and in mission fields. The explanation of the failure is probably, at least in nineteen cases out of twenty, that the supreme condition of a call from the Holy Spirit had been overlooked. In our day, as in the beginning of our era, there are many Bithynias into which the Holy Spirit does not suffer his servants to enter. The first supreme condition in every case of the kind is to spread the matter out before the mercy-seat of God and seek for divine guidance. When the Holy Spirit gives the token, either by a marked providence or by an irrepressible impulse of the soul, or in any other way which carries unquestioning conviction to the hearts of those concerned, the messengers of God may go forth on their errand with absolute confidence. The evangelist, like all other workers, is a co-worker with God. When he is assured that God is with him in the work, no place for failure is left so far as he is concerned.

The relation of this ever burning fire upon the altar of the heart to the personal holiness of the believer, is direct and vital. The perfecting of holiness in the fear of God is laid as an obligation upon us all, while it is no less set before us as a precious privilege to which all may aspire. The subject, however, is one which has given rise to much sharp disputation, and, as often happens in like cases, controversy has not done much to clear the question of its difficulties, or to harmonize the views of those specially intetested in it. In some cases counsel has been darkened by treating the subject in a metaphysical spirit ; in others, confusion has been introduced by the careless use of equivocal terms. Good men when investigating questions of this kind are strangely prone to forget that in the realm of spirit there are mysteries which elude, and ever must elude, the search of the human mind, and hence we are compelled at many points to stand still and wait in unquestioning submission to God's will, while he displays his power and shows us his salvation. He who knows perfectly how far it is possible for the human heart to be made holy can surely be entrusted with the task, with the single reservation that the supplicant in the case shall place no limit to the infinite love and power of the Almighty.

A story is related of two good men who were

once disputing on this subject, and, as often happens in such cases, their discussion had seemed only to drive them farther apart. "I am quite certain," said one of them, "that I sin more times in a day than I have hairs upon my head. It is absurd to talk about being saved from all sin."

"I should be sorry to hold such a view," was the reply. "I trust in a Saviour who saves from all sin, both in heart and in life."

"I fear you do not know your own heart; if you did you would not talk in this way. The heart is prone to evil, always and everywhere."

"Yes, I know that very well, but the evil can be taken out of it. A plot in my garden is full of weeds, but they can all be pulled up and carried away, and not the smallest weed will remain."

"But a new crop of weeds will immediately appear; the ground is full of their seeds and their roots."

"But I can burn a fire on the ground and destroy both roots and seeds."

"That is a bad illustration, my friend; in such a case more weeds will spring up out of the ashes than if no fire had been burned on the ground."

At this point a friend who had been listening ventured to interject a remark. "You differ, my friends," he said, "concerning the possibility of utterly destroying the weeds in the garden plot.

One of you thinks fire will permanently destroy the weeds, while the other is sure that it would only increase their next growth. But in one thing I feel certain, you will both agree with me. We all must agree that no weeds will spring up in that garden plot, *so long as the fire is kept burning*.

Here is the very essence of the whole question. We are called unto holiness, and there is no presumption in our venturing to respond with unreserved purpose to the call, but the possibility in the case is simply that of guarding the sacred fire which God kindles upon the altar of the heart. Sin cannot exist in the midst of this holy flame; holiness cannot retain its sway in the heart in which it is allowed to expire.

To every Christian, therefore, the ancient injunction comes with double force;—"The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out."

Chapter XIV

SHALL SEE VISIONS

XIV

SHALL SEE VISIONS

"It is not expedient, doubtless, for me to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord."

II Cor. xii. 1.

The word vision is not a term which commends that which it represents to the general reader. It stands too closely related to its adjective *visionary* to be accepted as a word of good omen, and not a few readers will very possibly be inclined at first to shrink from accepting the scriptural affirmation, that in the best sense of the word the vision is a permanent gift of the Holy Spirit, and that it is an element of abiding power in the experience of spiritually minded believers at the present day. No intimation is found in either the Old or the New Testament that a time would ever come when this gift should be withdrawn, and it is abundantly evident that it was bestowed in full measure throughout the apostolic era. As a New Testament gift it has thus both prediction and precedent to sanction its claims. Like the other gifts which were not strictly of a miraculous character, it is still supported and illustrated by the testimony of vast numbers of living Christians, and in the light of this testimony it becomes a subject of intelligent inquiry and devout study.

The spiritual gift known by the term vision is so closely associated with the peculiar manifestations given through the medium of dreams, that in some cases the two are spoken of interchangeably. Thus when we read of Paul's vision in the night, of a Macedonian appearing before him and entreating him to go to the help of his countrymen, we can hardly doubt that the whole scene transpired in a dream. On other occasions the vision would appear in connection with a trance, as in the case of Peter at Joppa; but the most striking visions would seem to have been vouchsafed during waking hours, as in the case of Isaiah, or of Paul at the time of the "heavenly vision" granted him in connection with his conversion. Founded originally upon the manifestations granted to the ancient seers, these visions after Pentecost became more spiritual, more varied, and very much more frequent, than under the first dispensation. They seem to have served several purposes. They confirmed those on whom great burdens rested, as in the case of Paul, whose visions and revelations abounded to such an extent as to form a ground of appeal against the accusations of his many opponents. They served also as illustrations of God's purposes, or intimations of his will, or guides to personal duty. They further served a good and gracious purpose in the case of those who needed

guidance, and who were so situated that help could not be found from human teachers. As in the apostolic age, so in our own time, many, probably the majority of Christians, are often placed beyond the reach of human guidance or comfort, and the vision in some of its manifestations is graciously used by the Holy Spirit to afford the peculiar help which the troubled disciple needs.

The spiritual manifestations known as visions, at least so far as realized in the experience of believing Christians in the present age, may be said, first of all, to be illustrated in the personal manifestation of Christ to the inner consciousness of the believer. This experience, it is true, was familiar enough in New Testament times, but it is always best to refer to the testimony of living persons when we can do so. Paul speaks with quiet confidence of the time when it "pleased the Father to reveal his Son" in him, and evidently felt assured when doing so that no one would either doubt the fact or challenge the statement. It was a fact too well known, and an experience with which the early believers were too familiar, to call for either explanation or proof. This manifestation of Christ as a divine Saviour is not a matter of universal experience among Christians, but is exceedingly common, especially among those who, in New Testement phrase, are spiritually

minded. In illustration of this let me introduce a brief statement from one who had given special attention to this subject.

"When I first learned what it was to trust in Christ as a personal Saviour, it seemed to me as if I saw afar off the Crucified One hanging upon the cross. This appearance very greatly helped my feeble faith, and from time to time, especially when in earnest prayer, it reappeared before my spiritual vision more vividly than at first. After some months it occurred to me that very possibly my experience was not exceptional in this respect, and I ventured to mention it to several intimate friends, and asked if they had ever received a similar impression. To my surprise they all assured me that there was nothing peculiar in what I had experienced, except in some incidental features of the manifestation. Beginning my inquiry in this way, I have since spoken to many persons on the subject, and in reply to direct questions have learned that in an immense majority of cases, so far as spiritually minded Christians are concerned, there is a personal manifestation of Christ to the believer. This manifestation is not, however, uniform by any means. On the contrary it is seldom precisely the same in the case of even two individuals. In the case of persons who have but recently become

believers, the appearance of Christ upon the cross is very frequent, but in detail such manifestations nearly always differ. Many seem to see before them, in outline, the person of their risen Lord; others catch a glimpse of the glorified form hovering over them, while very many simply become conscious of the hallowed presence of the blessed Master close beside them. One eminent man, when questioned, said he had never even once had in faintest outline any representation of Christ to his spiritual vision, and yet this man had always been noted for his habit of addressing his Saviour in prayer as a familiar friend, and in testimony had often been heard to say that he knew him "better than any earthly friend." The underlying fact in all these cases would seem to be the same.

No one can clearly describe the vision which he sees with the spiritual eye, and yet all alike become conscious of the immediate personal presence of the living Christ. But while, as a general rule, this manifestation is veiled in a measure, in some cases it is overwhelmingly vivid and impressive. As an illustration of this kind of vision, I may quote the following statement from the autobiography of the late Dr. C. G. Finney. After relating the steps by which he had been brought to a saving trust in Christ, Dr. Finney says :—

"There was no fire and no light in the room;

nevertheless it appeared as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me that it was wholly a mental state ; it seemed that I saw him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have ever since regarded this as a remarkable state of mind ; for it seemed to me that He stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to him. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confession as I could with my choked utterance."

It is very noteworthy that in this remarkable statement Dr. Finney makes no effort to describe the personal appearance of the Personage which appeared before him, beyond simply remarking that he saw him as he would "any other man." This same reticence is observed by every one who attempts to describe manifestations of this kind. It is very frequently remarked by those who testify to such appearances, that the Saviour of the vision appears in his humanity rather than with the glory of the enthroned King of all worlds ; but no one ever brings away from such scene a distinct impression of the features of the Personage. It was thus in the case of the theophanies of scripture. At most, one or two peculiarities are described, but

no outline is attempted from which a portrait could be produced. Isaiah merely says that he saw Jehovah on his throne, "high and lifted up." Daniel saw the "Ancient of days," whose garment was white as snow, and whose hair was like pure wool, but no further description was attempted. John on Patmos saw the throne of God in heaven, but by way of detail merely remarks that He that sat upon the throne "was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." The fullest outline which is given in any of the theophanies is that of the risen Jesus as John saw him on Patmos, but in that scene the description of the majestic figure before whom John fell upon the ground as one dead, is such that no painter has ever tried, or ever thought of trying, to reproduce it. Nothing could be more suggestive than the devout reticence with which John speaks of the glorified Jesus on the judgment throne at the last day;—"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." In this reserve of the sacred writers may be seen an incidental but very striking proof of their inspiration. Had they not been guided by the unerring Spirit, they would certainly have attempted an elaborate and grotesque description of the Divine Being such as the rude ideas of the ancient world would certainly have demanded.

If it be objected that Dr. Finney's experience was wholly exceptional, and hence not very trustworthy, it is sufficient to reply that while it was very striking in some of its features, it was by no means exceptional. Take for instance the case of Bishop Ninde, an eminent and saintly man still living, and who enjoys the boundless confidence of all who know him. The following brief paragraph is taken from an article in a recent periodical. No witness could be cited in such a case whose testimony would be more unimpeachable, and few evangelical men are more widely known than Bishop W. X. Ninde :—

"Bishop Ninde, in preaching at Epworth Church, Cambridge, last Sunday morning, a sermon of profound thoughtfulness and spiritual power, made the following statement: 'When seventeen years of age, though I had received Christian instruction and nurture, I had drifted into a condition of doubt concerning the verities of the Bible. One evening while walking in my room alone, I had a vision of Christ extending his arms toward me in compassionate love and persuasion. It made me weep, and I wished most earnestly that I could believe the declarations of the Bible concerning him. A month later, I had another vision. I saw Christ on the cross, and the cross was not in far-away Judea, but right

before me, and he hung there for me. The vision broke and filled my heart, and I became his disciple.'"

Similar illustrations might be drawn from various sources if space permitted, but only one more can be inserted. The following brief paragraph was written as a part of a private letter which found its way into a religious periodical. The writer is a well-known minister, at present residing in Ohio:—

"Then it was that the blessed Holy Spirit opened my understanding to know the scriptures. I saw that they must be of God, because they quadrated exactly with what he put into my soul, which I saw must be so. It was in the demonstration of the Holy Ghost who enabled me to perceive the absolute certainty of the things which he showed me, with a clearness of vision which I had never enjoyed in the contemplation of geometrical demonstrations. Then it was that the Holy Spirit took of the things of Christ and showed them unto me. One attribute after another was disclosed in me and to me, until there was a complete revelation of Christ made to my soul, so absolute, so wonderful, that I fell my full length on the floor on my face at his feet, and sobbed out in wonder and adoration, 'O, this is Jesus of Nazareth, the very same Jesus that was

crucified.' I was as absolutely certain of it as I was of my own being. How long I remained in this wonderful fellowship I know not, but it was many hours. I may not give you further details. But here I saw with wonderful astonishment the way out of all my difficulties. What I had accepted traditionally, I now knew. Much which I had believed because my father and mother had believed, and because the Church had believed, I now had from the very source which had been drawn upon by the apostles and prophets. It seemed so wonderful to me that He loved me just as much and as truly as he did any of them. For myself, at last, I knew the living, reigning, risen, personal Man of Galilee, Man of Calvary."

While these illustrations of the supreme vision of a personal Saviour manifested to the innermost consciousness of believers are placed before the reader, it must not be supposed that the present day vision begins and ends at this point. So far from conceding this, it should be remembered that under the present dispensation this gift is manifold in its manifestation, and permanent as an inheritance of believers. Take, for instance, the aid in prayer, especially in the case of immature Christians, which is afforded by various imageries which are presented before the mind in such a way as to illustrate some truth, or suggest

some duty, or stimulate a weak faith, or in some other way help believers in prayer. The late Dr. T. C. Upham, in referring to this subject, admitted that the Spirit did vouchsafe such help in some cases, but intimated that it was chiefly done in the case of persons of defective culture and intelligence. This reservation, however, is a mere assumption. The cultured need such help as well as others, and in any case when it is remembered that only a small fraction of the human race is either cultured or intelligent, it will hardly do to assume that such special help is only afforded to a few persons and under exceptional circumstances. As a matter of fact the testimony of multitudes would seem to indicate quite an opposite conclusion. Very many persons when engaged in prayer become conscious of various kinds of imagery appearing before their spiritual vision in such a way as to help them. An appearance, for instance, of what the supplicant conceives to be the Mercy Seat, passes before the one engaged in prayer, and the soul is inspired with renewed confidence by the thought that access has been found into the very presence of God. Other features of the temple service are used in the same way. New Testament scenes are often reproduced in vision—such as Jesus meeting Mary, or healing the leper, or blessing the little ones, or

sending forth his disciples. Recent events, personal duties, and pending troubles or anxieties—all are subject to this kind of illustration, as many Christians can testify.

That God uses simple but inspired visions to guide his people, especially when guidance is imperatively needed, cannot be doubted by any one who becomes familiar with the mind of the Spirit. We may easily conceive of peculiar circumstances under which help of this kind becomes not only very important, but would seem to be an imperative necessity. While the word of God or the counsel of Christian friends, or the indications of providence, or the use of a prayerful private judgment, may suffice with many in the ordinary course of a life-time, special contingencies may be expected in the case of others, where it would seem nothing but the immediate and direct help of the Holy Spirit can afford the relief or personal direction which may be needed.

The following sketch from the pen of a missionary in India may serve to illustrate one of the many instances in which such help is required :—

"It so happened that I had become involved in some special work among a class of nominal Roman Catholics, partially of Portuguese descent, and known in the city as "Kintal people." They

were for the most part thriftless and poor, without education, or any desire for improvement in this life, and with very little concern for the life to come. In all that related to spiritual things I had always found them peculiarly unimpressible. In some way I had become strangely depressed at this time, and was finding life little more than a daily struggle against a spirit of abnormal discouragement. It so happened one day that I was called to the cemetery, and while walking up one of the paths I chanced to meet a poor woman with her three children belonging to this class of people. The four formed a group representative of the class to which they belonged. Their faces wore a stolid, listless expression, and as they passed by my heart sank within me when the thought occurred that I was wasting the best years of my life in trying to reach and save such people. The task seemed hopeless. I began to study anew the conditions under which I might expect success, and it seemed that I was trying to build without a foundation, and without any stable material with which to work. Such people as those I had just seen had not enough character to form a moral base on which an enduring work could be constructed, and I was powerfully tempted to think that I was toiling in vain without success, and with the certainty of permanent failure.

"Some days, or possibly weeks, had passed, and the incident had been almost dismissed from my mind, when it was recalled in an extraordinary manner. I was in my room alone, engaged in private prayer, and still sorely oppressed with a peculiar heaviness of spirit, when I suddenly seemed to see, as if in dimly outlined vision, the poor woman and the three children whom I had met in the cemetery. The accuracy of the representation was remarkable. Next I perceived in much less distinct outline a figure which I at once recognized as that of the Saviour, standing before the group and looking at them with an expression of the utmost tenderness and compassion. I wish I could describe what followed, but human language is not adequate to such a task. In some way the mother and her children seemed to be drawn to the Saviour, and one by one they were lifted up and merged into his person and made partakers of his character, and yet did not lose their own individuality. An indescribable change came over them. They seemed to have been at once transferred and transformed; transferred from the associations of the Kintal community to kinship with the Saviour of the world, and transformed into a character which harmonized with their new environment. I do not know how long this vision

lingered before my view, but it is probable that it all transpired in a very few moments. The impression made upon myself was not only remarkable, but permanent. The unwonted depression vanished in a moment, and returned no more. I did not, however, find, as might have been expected, that a new commission had been given me for work among the Kintal people. The vision was 'for many days,' and the new commission was for a wider field. Again and again since that day I have been confronted by the same problem, and on each occasion the memory of the lesson once taught me in so strange a manner has been sufficient to strengthen my faith, uphold my courage, and to assure me anew that the risen Son of God is abundantly able to lift up and permanently uphold every son and daughter of the human race."

If space permitted, many instances might be cited of experiences not indeed similar in detail to the above, but like it in the essential fact of a scenic presentation to the believer's consciousness which conveyed a much needed lesson, or in some way afforded relief in a time of very urgent need. If it be objected that such examples are limited to a very few persons, it is sufficient to reply, first, that such manifestations may be more frequent than is generally supposed ; and further,

that although other illustrations may be less remarkable, they are none the less real. Many persons hesitate to speak, except in the most guarded manner, of such occurrences in their own experience, while others no doubt wisely conclude that experiences which are important to themselves might impress strangers as trivial, and thus fail to commend the special grace which they wish to exalt. But even if it be conceded that the promised bestowment of the Pentecostal gift known as vision, is comparatively a very rare experience at the present day, it ought to be remembered that this, like all God's gracious gifts, is given or withheld according to the measure of faith manifested by God's people. At one of the saddest periods of spiritual declension in ancient Israel, it is recorded in pathetic phrase by the historian that "there was no open vision." It can hardly be doubted that greater fidelity to duty on the part of the Church generally, would bring back to the earth again not only a very much fuller and more frequent manifestation of the vision known to the Church of Pentecost, but also of all the other precious gifts which accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The practical value of a more general distribution of this gift can hardly be appreciated by the average Christian of the present generation. We

have all become so accustomed to the fixed habit of estimating spiritual possibilities by the standard of modern Christianity, rather than by the statements of the New Testament, or by the facts realized in the Church of Pentecost, that a bold affirmation, both of the possibility and of the very great need of the lessons taught by vision through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, quite startles the average Christian. "What good would come of it if all these visions were to become common again? What new power would be given to the Church? What possible effect would there be upon the world? Does every modern Christian need a special call to special duty, such as Paul received when he was summoned into Macedonia?" These and similar questions meet us the moment we venture to accept as a permanent privilege the promise of Joel that Christian believers shall have visions revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

But those who ask such questions should remember that they move in a very narrow circle, and utterly fail to realize the needs of hundreds of millions of the human race. This world is to be brought to Christ. The necessities which made the special help and guidance of the Spirit so imperative in Paul's day exist to-day, but magnified a hundredfold. If the world is to become a

Christian world within a century or two, men like Paul will be needed, not by the score, but by the hundred and the thousand. When millions of eager and dimly illuminated converts begin to throng the door-ways of the Church in every land; when hundreds of millions of non-Christian people begin to move in great masses toward Christianity; who will be sufficient for the overwhelming responsibilities of the hour? When that day comes—and it is surely coming, and coming speedily,—the utmost help which the gifts of Pentecost could afford will be imperatively needed, and needed in full measure. In such an era millions of half-taught disciples will need the instruction which the Spirit can impart by simple visions revealed to the consciousness, while a great host of workers can be directed into paths of usefulness, or assigned to special posts of duty, as happened on a limited scale in primitive days. Surely it was not in vain that the ancient prophet included among his predictions the assurance that in the golden age of spiritual gifts our "young men should see visions."

Chapter XV

SHALL DREAM DREAMS

XV

SHALL DREAM DREAMS

Who has not heard the question asked, perhaps a score of times, "Do you believe in dreams?" The tone in which the inquiry is made may indicate contempt, or mere curiosity, or, perhaps, a certain kind of hesitating doubt, according to the standpoint of the individual, but as a general rule the question is not taken very seriously. Dreams are so exceedingly common, and are so often trivial and even foolish, that intelligent persons cannot easily be persuaded that any dream can possibly indicate anything more than the random operations of a human mind acting under abnormal conditions. But when we open our Bibles we are confronted by the fact that from the patriarchal age down to the New Testament era, God seems to have used the dream as a medium of communication with his servants, and even in some instances in the case of persons who were not avowed believers in Jehovah. Jacob's dream, in which he saw the stairway of light, connecting earth with heaven, upon which the angels of God were ascending and descending, is, perhaps, the most striking instance of the kind recorded in the Old Testament; but the agency of the inspired

dream in directing the career of his illustrious son, shows us even more clearly how at that early period God employed this peculiar mode of revealing his will to men. As happened in the case of other gifts, impostors were quick to put forward claims to special revelations received in dreams, but while these were rebuked and forbidden, in no place do we find any intimation that God had ceased to reveal himself through this medium. On the other hand, in one of the most remarkable predictions found among the writings of the ancient prophets, we find a distinct promise that a time would come when this gift should be bestowed in much larger measure than had been known under the former dispensations. It may be said, it is true, that not many references to the subject occur after Pentecost, but this is partly due to the fact that the term, night vision, is sometimes employed, as twice in the case of Paul, and also because in the very brief history of those early days which has come down to us, minor incidents are for the most part omitted.

If it be objected that, as in the case of the vision, no very important purpose can be served by lessons imparted through dreams, it ought to suffice to reply that this abnormal mental state is not only almost universal, but also that it is extremely frequent in the case of many persons, and that

when interpreted, not by the fancy of individuals, but by the Holy Spirit himself, God can thus reveal things to many feeble mortals which they could not easily receive in any other way. It cannot be repeated too often that the great mass of men and women in our world are wholly illiterate; that teachers are few; and the compassionate Father of all can employ, and no doubt does employ, means of instruction in dealing with individuals which would never occur to us, and which we, perhaps, could not appreciate if revealed to us. As the midnight hour strikes its note which never ceases till it girdles the earth, God looks down upon fifteen hundred million souls, all wrapped in slumber, and all objects of his tender pity and love. Human parents can seldom watch their slumbering little ones, even for a minute or two, without stooping to kiss them: Does the Father of all look down upon all these slumbering myriads with less tenderness than an earthly parent? Does He never stoop to touch even one among them? Is there no divine kiss for the little ones of the Kingdom? And does God never whisper a message of love, or life, or light, through a vision of night to any of those over whose slumbers He watches through all the long night hours of their lives?

If we examine this subject in the light of well

attested facts, it will soon become apparent that God does instruct and help many of his people by fulfilling to them the promise which the Spirit gave at Pentecost concerning the gift of dreams. Before proceeding to lay before the reader a few brief sketches illustrating this method of teaching and guiding those in darkness or doubt, I wish to say frankly that, to the best of my recollection, I have never, even in a single instance, had a dream which impressed me in the slightest degree as having been sent from above. Whatever conclusions I have reached in studying the subject, and whatever convictions I may hold concerning it, have been wholly the result of the affirmations of Scripture, and the testimony of intelligent persons whose integrity was beyond all possible question.

Some twenty years ago an educated and devout Hindu who had a fair knowledge of the New Testament, and who was sincerely trying to find the way of life through faith in Christ, spoke to me about the difficulty he experienced in trying to concentrate his mind wholly upon God. The Hindu idea of spiritual meditation is that of entire mental abstraction from everything except God alone, not for a few moments only, but for a prolonged time. This, however, proved a task quite beyond this devout man's ability, and he became sorely troubled on the subject. He could

not give up his employment, nor could he neglect his family duties, but these obligations seemed to interpose a permanent bar to all his efforts to love and serve God as he wished to do, and as he believed it was his duty to do. Friends tried to correct his mistaken notion, but to no purpose. While trying vainly to learn the secret of unbroken meditation, he dreamed one night that he saw a lamb with its mother in a beautiful pasture field. The mother was quietly grazing, while the lamb was playfully skipping about, sometimes at its mother's side, and again at a little distance, but never out of sight, and never far enough away to endanger its immediate protection. It was a pleasing spectacle to the sleeper, and as he watched the lamb and its mother his problem was solved. "This lamb," he said, "enjoys perfect liberty, and follows its own pursuits, and yet it has the presence and companionship of its mother every moment. Is not this God's plan for me? I need not leave Him, nor lose sight of Him, and yet be able to do my work, to take care of my family, and attend to all my duties." From this hour the good man understood that communion with God did not mean mental abstraction and physical idleness.

Now in a case of this kind what possible method of teaching could be so well adapted to the need

of the inquirer, as a vision of the Spirit given through the medium of a dream? There are many millions of such men in India, and surely it need not be considered either extravagant or fanciful if it is suggested that in helping them into the light, the Holy Spirit may be expected to use the very simple agency of dreams in the night watches.

The next case to be cited, both as an illustration and a testimony, is that of a person of very different character, who had been brought up in the midst of very different associations. A gentleman occupying a responsible official position in India, and who had been nearly twenty years in the country, was somewhat suddenly awakened to a sense of his own spiritual danger. His concern was deep and earnest to an extraordinary degree, but he knew of no one within reach to whom he could go for advice. He had a wide circle of devoted friends, but among them all he could not think of even one near by who would be able to understand his trouble, much less sympathize with him in his deep distress. He recalled one military friend who might have been able to help him, but this friend was stationed at a place so far away that it would have required a week's journey to reach him. Meanwhile his spiritual concern became more intense, and in his eager desire to find rest for both mind and heart he

closed his office, and shut himself up alone to seek by study and prayer relief for his troubled soul. Some days were thus spent, when at length help came in a very unexpected way. In a dream of the night he found himself back again in his native Scotland. Before him lay a ploughed field, but all covered and disfigured by large clods which had been baked in the sun until they seemed as hard as stone. While looking at this ill-favoured field, a light rain began to fall, but the sun continued to shine, and the gleam of the sunshine upon the rain drops gave a strangely pleasing beauty to the scene. Then in a very few minutes the big clods began to melt away, and soon the whole surface of the field became a beautiful expanse of mellow earth tinted with golden sunshine. The whole picture became not only very pleasing to the eye but restful to the mind, and as the sleeper gazed upon it a voice seemed to say, "It is thus with the work of grace in the heart." The sleeper awoke, but his doubts and fears had taken their flight to return no more. He lived many years to adorn a life of consistent Christian courage and devotion, and never doubted the supreme fact that he had passed from death to life at this eventful period.

It is very easy to say that no dream can be trustworthy, and to affirm that God would not

employ such an agency, but on the other hand, in a case like the one before us, what more reasonable means of guiding one in sore need could have been suggested than that which proved so effective in the case of this storm-tossed soul. It ought to be noted that in most such cases, the ministry which is sent through dreams, is given to those who otherwise could not have found the help which was needed. One or two additional examples may make this still more clear.

Nearly forty years ago a religious devotee in Upper India, who was attended by eight or ten disciples devoted like himself to the wandering life of religious mendicants, lay down to sleep in a village hut. He was a man of a simple but sincere character, and was in a mental attitude which prepared him to receive new light. In his sleep he dreamed, and saw in vision a stranger coming to him, who told him to go to the missionaries in Moradabad, and he would learn from them what he must further do to attain the way of life and salvation. In relating the occurrence he was never able to describe the appearance of the messenger who appeared to him in his dream, save that he was clothed in white, and seemed to him to be a foreigner. The devotee did not for a moment doubt that both messenger and message had been sent to him from God, and in the morn-

ing he announced to his disciples that he was going at once to the missionaries. He accordingly went to Moradabad, taking his disciples with him. His story was at first doubted, and the whole party were subjected to a discipline of such severity that in the course of a week all except the leader left and returned to their wandering life as religious mendicants. But it was very different with the man who had received the message in the night vision. Nothing could shake his confidence, and nothing could lessen his courage or the spirit of endurance with which he met all manner of disappointments and hardships. He accepted whatever fell to his lot as a part of the career which God had marked out for him, and a year or two later was found with a band of Christian disciples whom he had gathered around him. Step by step he gained the confidence of Christian brethren, and for many years before his death was known, and loved, and trusted, as a preacher of the gospel of the Son of God.

Here again, it may certainly be asked in all reason, How was this wandering devotee, living as he did in a region where missionaries had only recently appeared, and where they were very few in number, to be guided to their door, except by some kind of special intervention from above? And if God is to send a special message to such a man,

what more simple and intelligible means could have been employed than the very familiar medium of a sleeper's dream? But another incident may make this still more clear.

About thirty years ago two Scandinavian missionaries had established a station among a people known as Santalis, in western Bengal. These people were illiterate, and had long been regarded as difficult of access by the missionary. The two missionaries found them an interesting people, and friendly enough, but for some time there seemed no way of arousing any special interest among them in the message which the missionaries had brought to them in their jungle homes. One night, however, a villager who had given no special attention to the missionaries, had a remarkable dream in which he was directed to go to a certain spot in an open field, where a message would be given him, telling him what further steps he was to take. The dream was so vividly impressed upon his mind that he awoke, and nothing doubting at once arose and proceeded to the spot which had been indicated to him. But on arriving there he found no one present. Darkness reigned upon the landscape, and the cry of the night birds was the only sound which reached him. Had his dream appeared to him in less vivid outline, or had the message given to him been less definite,

he would probably have returned to his home and slept again till morning, but no thought of doing this for a moment entered his mind. Finding no one waiting for him he simply sat down on the ground, and waited for the expected messenger to come. The hours went slowly by; the gray light of early dawn began to appear in the east, and soon objects around him began to be visible. As the light increased the poor watcher noticed something white at his feet, and picking it up found that it was a small piece of paper, with something printed on it. He could not read a word, but at once concluded that this paper contained the message which he sought, and forthwith set off to the missionaries to get them to read it for him. It proved to be part of a torn leaf from the New Testament, and the words which it contained were singularly adapted to the wants of the poor villager. The message was received by him without doubt as having been sent from God; he accepted Christ and the Christian religion; became a religious leader and a Christian preacher, and through his influence and efforts a movement began which in the course of a few years led to the conversion of four thousand of the Santali people. The converted villager became widely known as "the dreamer," but there was nothing "dreamy" in his character or his career. He lived consistently, worked

faithfully, and successfully, and died in the faith.

Those who are inclined to judge all questions of divine providence by their own notions of propriety, or expediency, or wisdom, may persist in refusing to attach importance to incidents of this kind, but in doing so they shut out from the range of their observation and influence a large portion of the events in the midst of which they live and move. All Christian workers and all Christian students need to be reminded, over and over again, that the world in which they live and act is a very wide world ; that God's ways and means are not limited by man's notions of propriety or policy, and that the Holy Spirit is ever working among the thronging masses of the utterly illiterate heathen, as well as among the cultivated few who sometimes seem to fancy that they enjoy a monopoly of God's love and care. But it is not the poor and the ignorant alone who are instructed and helped by special manifestations such as those outlined above. The Holy Spirit is absolutely impartial, and the night vision is sent alike to high and low, cultured and ignorant, as the Holy Spirit sees that the recipients are prepared to receive the message. To further illustrate this fact I must beg the reader's indulgence while I insert one more illustration, in this case, of a man who never in the course of a long life

time had been known to show any special interest in questions of this kind.

The late Dr. Daniel Curry, of New York, was well known as a man of clear and strong mental powers which had been subjected to a life long course of severe discipline. It would have been difficult to find any one less inclined to accept alleged facts which seemed to partake of a supernatural or preternatural character. He was conservative in his religious views, and very guarded in his expression of religious experience. At an advanced age he was prostrated by a serious illness, and lay upon what he knew was to be his dying bed. Some days before his death the late Dr. Sandford Hunt called to see him, and in the course of conversation Dr. Curry mentioned to him that he had been greatly strengthened and comforted by a remarkable dream, which he proceeded to relate without further comment, beyond the fact that it had afforded him help and comfort to an extent which he could find no words to describe.

It seems that in his dream he had found himself as one who had awaked after death in the world of spirits, and that he was nearing the gate of heaven in hope of gaining admittance and finding there his eternal home. On nearing the gate a very grave and solemn personage, in the character

of keeper of the gate, appeared before him and began to ask him a series of searching questions.

"Who are you, and why are you here?"

"I am Daniel Curry, of New York, and have come here hoping to gain admission to heaven."

"Have you always been a good man?"

"No, I must confess that I have not; I have committed many sins."

"Are you a Christian?"

"Yes, I trust that I am."

"Have you been faithful to God ever since you first professed to be a Christian?"

"No, I cannot say that I have; I have too often been unfaithful."

Other searching questions followed, all bringing out more clearly the failure of the applicant, until overwhelmed with utter shame he hung his head with a deep feeling of sorrow and remorse. His case seemed hopeless. His record had been one of sin and failure, and he could enter no plea in his own behalf. At this supreme moment a radiant form of another Personage appeared beside the keeper of the gate, whom the despairing child of earth at once recognized as no other than the glorified Saviour of sinners. "I have undertaken for Daniel Curry," spake the mighty Friend of sinners, and at once the keeper stood aside, the gate opened before him, and heaven was his

to enter and enjoy. At this point the sleeper awoke, and found himself in a state of profound emotion, but so strengthened and filled with comfort, and so assured of the divine presence and help, that he could find no words when relating the incident to express his feelings.

The value of this incident can only be fully appreciated by those who knew Dr. Curry. It is the more noteworthy, because in its essential features it conforms to the manifestations granted to the illiterate, and even to those who would by some be called heathen. But the chief point to notice is that it gave an aged disciple of Christ, when nearing the gates of death, the peculiar measure of light and comfort and strength which he needed. God had come near to speak to him, and in the light of what followed it would surely be difficult to conceive of any divine manifestation which could have more perfectly accomplished the end in view, than was done by this singular, but very remarkable dream.

No importance can be attached to the fact that the strict language of the prediction seems to limit the gift of inspired vision to the young, while that of dreams is assigned to the old. The terms of the entire paragraph seem simply to convey the idea that in the good time coming God's bountiful gifts should be distributed among be-

lievers in abundant measure, without regard to age, sex, or social position. Sons and daughters, servants and hand-maidens, young and old, all should be alike eligible to the rich privileges of that blessed era which was to come in the "last days," not of the world's history, but of the old dispensation. God's gifts have not been classified according to human standards or ideas, but are open to all alike, although subject to the choice in every case of infinite wisdom.

While speaking thus unequivocally on the main subject, and avowing my confident belief that God's servants in our age, and all through the present dispensation, are often instructed and led by intimations received in night visions, I would not for a moment be understood as advising any preacher or teacher to give prominence to this subject. During a preaching ministry of more than forty years I have never once preached upon the subject, not because of any doubt concerning it, but because of the infirmity of a somewhat large class of hearers. Some people are so constituted that they seem inevitably to give undue prominence to everything which is exceptional. George Muller found that in some communities he could not preach on the subject of healing by the prayer of faith because of an unhealthy curiosity, or mistaken views concerning God's method of

helping those in trouble. It is so with other subjects as well. It would be perilous and unwise for any preacher to proclaim a gospel of dreams, but within such limitations as were observed in New Testament days, there can be no danger in wisely instructing disciples of all ages and all degrees of culture, to accept any and every properly attested message which God may send them. On the other hand we should be very slow to affirm when good people speak of impressions received through dreams that they are misled by fancies. They may or may not be misled, but in any case it is best to treat their convictions seriously, and point out to them the difference between the Spirit's leading and mere fancies of the mind.

Chapter XVI

CHRISTIAN CONSECRATION

XVI

CHRISTIAN CONSECRATION

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Romans xii. 1.

"Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own."

Acts iv. 32.

The very simple, but extremely comprehensive, rule of consecration which prevailed in the Church of Pentecost, is strikingly expressed in the statement that no one said that aught of the things he possessed was his own. By the triple right of creation, preservation, and redemption, God justly claims the unreserved service of every member of the race. This includes not only the personal service of the individual but all that belongs to him, whether in the shape of material things, mental endowments, physical powers, personal influence, or anything else which possesses value of any kind to its owner. The believer is represented as a living sacrifice laid upon the altar of God, and placed without reserve at the disposal of his Master. The importance of personal consecration is abundantly affirmed in the New Testament, and had been clearly foreshadowed in various ceremonial services under the Jewish dispensation. The uniform law of tithing had from a very early

period in Hebrew history made the people familiar with the idea of personal obligation to God, and unfaithfulness in meeting this demand had always been denounced by the prophets as akin to personal dishonesty. The first disciples, having all been Jewish proselytes, were no doubt in a measure prepared for the enlarged obligation to consecrate both their substance and themselves without reservation to God.

It does not appear that any special instruction was given to them on this subject, but rather that the extraordinary spirit of giving which took possession of the whole community was the spontaneous offspring of the love of Christ which had been implanted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the spirit of consecration which so quickly appeared among the people was one of the many "fruits of the Spirit" which attended the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and which may be expected to attend every anointing of the Spirit which is given in like measure. If certain believers are found to be ever ready to part with their possessions in obedience to the call of God, or of humanity, it may be accepted as certain that they have been made partakers of the Spirit's anointing, while on the other hand if a believer, or a hunded believers, affirm that they have received the baptism of the Spirit in Pentecostal

measure, and yet cling to their money and their possessions as eagerly as before, it becomes painfully evident that they are mistaken. They may have received light and blessing from above, but not in the fulness of measure which seems to have been the common heritage of the whole body of believers in the Church of Pentecost. The laws of grace have not changed with the lapse of the centuries. The believer of to-day who is filled with the Spirit will give of his substance with as free a hand as those who were members of the first Christian Church.

In a previous chapter it was remarked that when a Christian disciple receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the chief feature of the work wrought in his heart is the uniting of the believer by a living spiritual bond to his Lord and Saviour. In his farewell prayer Jesus had spoken of his own consecration in remarkable terms:—"And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be truly sanctified." (John xvii. 20.) The word "sanctify" has two meanings; to consecrate or set apart, and to make holy. In the latter sense our Saviour could not have applied the word to himself; but in the former sense no term could have been more fitly used to describe his life, and still more his death, of unreserved devotion to God and humanity. His entire life was one long

act of consecration to his mission on earth. As with the Master, so with the disciple. The branch is like, and must be like, the Vine. When filled with the Spirit the believers in the Church of Pentecost needed no exhortation to benevolence. The law of unquestioning consecration had been written on their hearts, and the sight of human want was all that was needed to prompt it to action.

In our day we constantly hear of "consecration meetings," and a considerable literature has been created in the special interest of this subject. Hymns of consecration are sung, and sermons on the supreme duty of consecrated living are often heard in modern churches. This is all right enough, and in the main to be commended; but yet it does not appear that the subject was even mentioned in the Church of Pentecost. It was illustrated but not taught. As before remarked, the movement was spontaneous. The disciples were all filled with the Spirit, and being thus in normal measure made partakers of the spirit of Christ, their consecration was the natural, or rather gracious, result of their solemn consecration of themselves to God. No one felt the need of meetings to promote the work of personal consecration, for the very good reason that, as yet, no one had either felt or seen the need of a more perfect devotion to Christ and his cause than

that which filled the heart and mind of every member of the little community. As yet, the normal law of love held sway in the little church, and the normal spirit of consecrated giving received abundant illustration from day to day.

It must not be too hastily assumed that no practical spirit of consecration at all corresponding to that of which we read in the Church of Pentecost, can be found in any of our modern churches. Very many Christians are living in our world today who are quite as devoted, and who have surrendered worldly interests quite as promptly, as did the first disciples ; but a survey of the condition of even the most advanced and spiritually minded modern churches, forces upon us the conviction that the standard of personal consecration among Christian people generally is a very low one, and that the subject is but imperfectly understood. It is for this reason that a place is found for special meetings held in the interest of personal consecration and prayer. It is not that a better "experience" may be gained ; that hindrances to overcoming faith may be removed ; or that the believer may be taught to submit to the law of God in matters affecting certain phases of inner feeling ; but rather that the practical law of personal consecration to God's service may be taught. What is meant by that service ? In how

far is the service of God identical with the service of humanity? What "talents" have we? What is meant by selling all that we possess? In how far does disobedience to personal obligation stand in the way of our receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit? The prayerful study of such questions as these will not fail to suggest to those minds which are open to conviction, the practical meaning of Christian consecration. As the law is in a more general sense said to take the place of a school-master to bring us to Christ, so the law of consecration in this case can be, and very often is, used by the Spirit to bring believers to a realization both of their low spiritual state, and of their exalted privileges in Christ Jesus. The fact that special meetings for consecration are often badly conducted, and that the obligations taught are of the most superficial kind, does not really affect the subject. Truth must be taught in any case, and ought to be taught all the more faithfully because error is so prone to usurp its place.

A glance at the present condition of the Church at large, both in Europe and America, makes it painfully evident that the average consecration of those professing the Christian name is very defective. Take, for instance, the consecration of property. While figures can undoubtedly be so tabulated as to make it seem that the Christian

public is contributing large sums for benevolent purposes, yet when measured by the actual ability of the Church, the amount given to the various enterprises bearing the name of Christ is pitifully small. As an example, look at the great missionary cause, which in many respects is the most important Christian enterprise now before the public. Nearly all the leading societies of the world are struggling with financial difficulties, and as the years go by the earnest appeals put forth by those responsible for the management of these societies call forth only a very moderate response. It is impossible to conceal from ourselves, or from others, the humiliating fact that many foreign missions are slowly losing ground, at least in their financial interests. It may be said, of course, that we have been passing through a period of financial depression; but when it is stated that in the United States the sum of $15,000,000 is expended annually for chewing-gum, nothing need be added to show that financial stringency alone will not account for the humiliating position of the missionary societies. The root of the trouble is found in the want of intelligent consecration on the part of those who ought to be ready to give, not merely money, but life itself to a cause to which God has been summoning his people for a century past.

A people wholly consecrated to Christ and his work could, and would, make an end of the difficulty in a single day.

During recent years some special attention has been given to the subject of tithing, a custom which is borrowed from the ancient Hebrews, and certainly no Christian ought for a moment to regard the rule as too oppressive for disciples of Jesus Christ. Here and there Christians may be found who have solemnly consecrated one-tenth of their annual income, whatever that income may chance to be, to the service of God in some form or other. We may waive the question as to whether this obligation, which is clearly authorized in the Old Testament, should be carried over into the present dispensation. It may not be easy to prove that the same amount is required by the Christian which was given by the Jew, but it certainly ought to be accepted without question that the Christian cannot be expected to give less than the Jew. It would be humiliating to the last possible degree to maintain that the consecration of the Christian involves less giving on his part, than that of the less enlightened Hebrews who lived under the Mosaic dispensation. Be that as it may, the fact remains that Christians generally shrink from the idea of obligating themselves to tithe their incomes. Some view it with indifference, and some with

hostility; and yet the acceptance of this rule would at a single stroke relieve all Christian organizations from financial embarrassment, put new life into every kind of Christian enterprise, and double the working power of all Christian agencies. Where this plan has been tried marvels have been accomplished by persons in very moderate circumstances, and in some instances results have been attained which would surprise the public if more generally made known. Not very many years ago one of the wealthiest of New York's merchants died, having made a will which provided for the distribution of an immense amount of money in ways which would be of little benefit to any human being. The publication of the will created great surprise, and naturally called forth some pungent comments. A wealthy Christian who had known the deceased, was led to think seriously upon the sad outcome of a life which had consisted of a long struggle for wealth, only to end in what might be regarded as a disappointing blank. The result of a few hours' prayerful thought was a decision on his part that without waiting for death, and without trusting to the uncertain procedure of making a will, he would adopt the rule of giving one-tenth of his income to God; and acting upon this basis, the first thing he did the next moning was to set aside a large sum of

money to be divided equally between two leading educational institutions near his own city. The result was that these two institutions received a new lease of life, and to-day are standing as living monuments of a good man who was led promptly to do his duty by an awakened conscience.

One source of the failure to consecrate property to God is found in the persistent inclination of most persons to perform all their acts of consecration in intention only. Millions upon millions have been thus mentally consecrated by good men and women who found pleasure in determining to do good with their money, and who loved to form plans relating to it, but who to the last deluded themselves with the idea that they would complete the act in the future, instead of finishing it once for all at the time that conscience pressed the duty upon them. Wrecks of fortunes can be found all over the Christian world, which might have been saved for God and humanity had their former owners not been deluded by the pleasing but deceptive picture of a good act done in the future. A consecration of this kind is no consecration at all. It is true that God blesses the intention as well as the act, but the trouble in this case is that the intention is not fully formed. God's commandment is, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the

power of thine hand to do it." The too frequent attempt to evade this plain rule of action has resulted in the loss of many millions which ought to have gone into the Lord's treasury.

God's law of consecration is a subject which demands the most careful study on the part of parents. Many fathers, especially those possessed of wealth, seem to forget that they are responsible not only for the money which they spend themselves, but also for that which they put into the hands of their sons and daughters. A son of a godly Christian man has been known to live a life of disgraceful wickedness, always having ample money to spend in his riotous living, and never restrained by the thought that possibly his supplies might be cut off, simply because he trusted his father to provide the money. This may be an extreme case, and yet in all cases the parent is responsible not only for all that he spends himself, but for every penny which he puts into the hands of other persons to be expended by them. It is a sad thought, and yet it does seem to be but too true, that many parents assist their children in their downward course by providing them with money to expend in their evil ways. The sin of Eli, it is to be feared, is still exceedingly common among people who bear the Christian name.

Consecrated parents would do well to test the measure of their consecration to God by considering the possible future of their children. Account for the fact as we may, it is extremely rare for the son or daughter of wealthy parents to become eminent as personal workers in any department of Christian service. They are rarely found in the mission field, and seldom devote themselves to any career in the homeland which will bring them into personal contact with the lower classes of their fellow men. As a rule it is considered perfectly right for Christian parents, of whatever grade of society, to choose for their children such positions in life as will contribute most to their advancement in the social world, and to their success in gaining wealth. This is the more surprising in view of the fact that the practical consecration of children to a life which is virtually independent of any special claim from God, is neither the wisest nor the safest rule which could be followed. If God chooses a child for a secular calling, that will be the best possible place for the child ; but the uppermost thought with every parent should be that the children belong to God, and should be consecrated to Him for service in whatever field may be providentially allotted to them.

The present is an era of great opportunities. The doors of the nations have been opened to

missionaries of every class as never before. A thousand workers are needed in each great mission field of the world at once. Here and there a very few consecrated parents are ready to give their children for this service, but it is otherwise when a career is opened under any government, or by a wealthy business firm, with a liberal and well classified scale of salaries for those employed. Parents are then found eagerly competing with one another in their efforts to find employment for their sons. If soldiers are needed to go forth for war they are speedily found. When a great war breaks out, not only do parents give up their sons, and sisters their brothers, but even wives with dependent children clinging to them may be seen tearfully bidding their husbands go forth to war. Christian consecration ought to exhibit a spirit at least equal to this; but thus far pictures of this kind in the history of the missionary enterprise have only been seen in exceptional cases. Would to God that a new gospel of Christian consecration could be preached from every pulpit, and illustrated in every home throughout the Christian world.

The personal consecration of a Christian to the service of Christ should be understood to involve in every case personal service in some form. Here again we find a very confused notion in

the minds of most persons concerning this subject. Perhaps in nine cases out of ten the person concerned, if questioned on the subject, would calmly reply that he is not qualified to do any Christian work, and that he trusts others who have more leisure or better gifts to do all that is required. Those who have means often are prepared to go a step farther, and employ one or more substitutes to work for them. This is well enough if the substitute in question is employed in addition to what the person himself does. The chief point to remember is that there are certain forms of personal service from which no believer can be excused. These may not be the same in every case, but it will be found, if careful inquiry is made, that each individual stands related to certain tasks, or to certain other individuals, in such a way that obligations rest upon him which cannot possibly be discharged by any one else. "Go ye also into my vineyard," is a command given to every one who receives a call from the Master to become his disciple. In no case does it appear that the suggestion was made to any one of those thus sent that his duty might be fully discharged by employing a substitute.

We learn a striking lesson from an incident which occured in the history of the prophet Elisha. When the poor stricken mother came

to him to report the death of her child, the man of God first thought to lighten his duty by sending his servant with instructions to take his staff and lay it upon the face of the child, hoping and trusting that this would suffice to restore the dead child to his afflicted mother. The servant did as he was commanded, but of course the experiment was a failure. The mother's better instinct had told her from the first that the prophet must come in person, and she kept close to his side. When the man of God reached the house of mourning, he entered into the chamber of death and laid his own living form upon the lifeless corpse before him, so that his lips touched the lips of the little one cold in death; and only then did the sweet current of life begin to flow through the lifeless form of the child. It is often thus with Christian workers in our day. They shrink from personal contact with those whom they would influence for good. They would gladly employ some one to carry a lifeless walking-stick to the abode of sorrow or death, but the Master will not have it so. "Go thou," is the command. Every one who bears the Master's name should rejoice to receive such a command, and both seek and find that anointing from on high which will make his feet ever swift to run in the way of his commandments.

Chapter XVII

A TRAGEDY AND ITS LESSONS

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A TRAGEDY AND ITS LESSONS

Only one shadow falls upon the bright page which records the brief history of the Church of Pentecost, but that shadow is very dark indeed. The whole community was composed of Spirit-filled believers. The Holy Spirit, who had come in power at Pentecost, still abode among the people, and his presence and guidance were recognized to an extent which it is difficult for modern Christians to realize. He had been revealed as the Spirit of holiness, and also of truth. In obedience to his promptings large numbers of the people had been led to undertake duties which demanded extraordinary devotion and sacrifice, such as were illustrated in the almost daily spectacle of estates being sold and the proceeds applied to the relief of the stranger and the poor. It is evident that this service was regarded as obedience to the special promptings, but not the express command, of the Holy Spirit, and hence it possessed a peculiar sanctity in the eyes of the people. Among others, a man and wife came forward to present an offering of this kind, having, as they alleged, sold an estate for a sum of money which they tendered to the apostles. Whether

they had from the first deliberately resolved to deceive the apostles and the public, or, as is more probable, had yielded to a temptation after the sale to keep back part of the money by making a false statement, does not appear, but as a matter of fact they presented a false account, told a deliberate falsehood, and accepted public credit for a measure of devotion which they did not possess.

An awful retribution swiftly followed this act of deliberate trifling with the authority and guidance of Him who had come among men to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. First the husband, and three hours later the wife, fell dead after hearing an awful sentence pronounced by Peter, who expressly stated that their crime had been that of gross impiety in trying to deceive the Holy Spirit. It need hardly be added that an extraordinary fear fell upon the people, and it was thenceforth not only understood, but impressed deeply upon the public mind and heart, that the most awful sin which mortals could commit was that of profaning, or treating lightly, or disobeying, the Holy Spirit, in his personal and immediate ministration among men.

The fate of this husband and wife has long been a favourite subject for cavil among disbelievers in the Bible, and a difficult subject for apologists who wished to uphold the inspiration of the New

Testament, and at the same time maintain that in meting out justice to mortals God deals impartially with all. Granting that the facts narrated are to be accepted as historical, the thought occurs to the average reader that there was nothing in the sin of Ananias and Sapphira to make them appear more guilty than large numbers of professing Christians at the present day. Very many persons register vows which are not kept. Many undertake to pay money in God's name for religious and benevolent purposes, and afterward keep back part of the subscription. Sometimes such acts are avowed with attempts at justification, while in other cases they are concealed, but in no case is the sin regarded as either daring or glaring in the sight of either God or men. Why then were this most unhappy man and wife stricken down without a gleam of mercy? Were they sinners above all other sinners who have since lived, and if not, how are we to explain the awful severity of their punishment?

Before attempting to answer this question it may be well to refer for a moment to another tragedy with occurred far back in the early dawn of Hebrew history. Moses had set up the tabernacle in the desert, had explained the character of the service, had appointed the officiating priests, and when all arrangements had been completed, a

consuming flame had flashed forth from above the mercy seat, and kindled the fuel and sacrifices on the altar, in the sight of the ministering priests and many of the people. A deep impression had been made by this event, and the most thoughtless must have felt that the presence of the flame thus kindled was a sign to them of the ineffable holiness of God, who could not be lightly approached by sinful men. The distinction between sacred and profane fire was well understood, and an express command had been given that no fire drawn from any other source was ever to be used in connection with the tabernacle service. It would seem that after such a token of God's immediate presence no one could have been careless about such a matter, and yet two sons of Aaron, with impious indifference, took their censers and filled them with "strange fire." In a moment a lurid flame broke forth from the inner sanctuary, and the two thoughtless youths were stricken with instant death.

It is not strange that the tragical death of the two young priests made a deep and abiding impression upon the Hebrew people. In an age when religious truths could only be taught by a series of impressive object lessons, this incident not only startled the community but proclaimed the supreme majesty and holiness of God in a

manner which the Hebrew people were never wholly able to forget. The tragedy occurred in what might be called the kindergarten age of the religious world,* and its true import can only be properly estimated when this fact is borne in mind.

The death of Ananias and Sapphira can only be explained in the same way as that of the two sons of Aaron. It was an object lesson. The kindergarten age of the religious world was just passing away. The sacred fire of the temple altar was soon to be extinguished for ever; the type had already given place to the antitype; a Living Flame in the person of the Holy Spirit had come as the abiding Paraclete, and all believers were rejoicing in his light. But in the midst of the universal joy a peril was already appearing. Our poor humanity is weak at best. The free gift of the Spirit began to be regarded lightly, and even good men forgot that the God of universal love

* The most advanced nations in the ancient world could only have been taught spiritual truths by a series of striking object lessons, and this should ever be borne in mind when interpreting the Old Testament scriptures, and especially their earlier portions. In our own day many nations and tribes can be found equally low in civilization and in their range of thought, but the situation is radically changed when living men go to these degraded people, having spiritual truth incarnated in their own persons, and teach them as man teaching man. The pathetic plaint of a representative of the ancient world was, "He is not a man as I am;" but since Christ manifested God to the world and exalted man to kinship with himself, men filled with the Spirit can directly teach spiritual truth, although illustration may still be freely used in order to make the teaching intelligible.

was still a "consuming fire." The poor short-sighted husband and wife forgot that love and holiness are essentially one, and perhaps assuming that God's love, like human kindness, is sometimes blind, made the awful mistake of dealing dishonestly with the Holy Spirit and falsely with their brother Christians.

The penalty of their sin was swift and sure. As at the inauguration of the old dispensation, so also at that of the new, an object lesson was needed which could be held up as an awful warning for ages upon ages to come. Ananias and Sapphira are simply the Nadab and Abihu of the present dispensation. Their fate has long stood forth to teach its solemn lesson as the generations of men have passed by, and this most impressive lesson has never been more needed than at the present day.

It is by no means certain that Nadab and Abihu were in any special sense wicked youths. The brief story of their unhappy fate has a pathos in it which would seem to indicate that they were loved as sons and as brothers. It has been suggested that the prohibition against wine drinking which was given after their death may be accepted as indicating that they were partially intoxicated at the time, but if so, the same prohibition shows that in the free use of wine they did not differ

from the other priests, nor does it appear that Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites, or in any sense false believers, at the time they fell into the fatal snare which led to their ruin. It may be remembered that in the time of David a similar fate is said to have overtaken Uzzah, whose only offence had been that of rashness, and whose loyalty to God and to the king has never been questioned.

We are all perhaps too ready to interpret and apply God's judgments according to standards of our own, and in the meantime we constantly forget that where sudden judgment once overtakes the transgressor in the very act of sin, in a thousand other instances it delays its stroke for many years. It is perhaps not too much to say that in a large majority of cases human sins and crimes escape justice in the present life. One of the strongest arguments in favour of a future life is that in no other way can God's administration of justice in the present life be vindicated. The great truth brought to light by the writer of Ecclesiastes is the distinct revelation of a coming judgment in which the glaring inequalities of the present life shall all be rectified. In the light of this revelation announced in the dim era before Christ, and brought out in lines of awful grandeur and majesty by our Saviour himself, we should

pause long before assuming that a stroke of justice is in every case a sufficient evidence of extreme wickedness.

The fate which overtook Ananias and Sapphira was not so much a punishment of them as a warning to us. Vast numbers of professing Christians may be found at the present day who stand in urgent need of just such a warning. Any one who becomes intimately acquainted with the spiritual life of present-day Christians will soon discover that the sins of grieving the Spirit, resisting the Spirit, and even quenching the Spirit, are offences which too many lightly commit without a thought that in doing so they are treading on most perilous ground. As for the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, its exact counterpart may be witnessed only too often in our modern churches. Subscriptions to benevolent objects are publicly made, and perhaps public praise accepted for the act, but payment is deferred, delay encouraged, and perhaps in the end full payment evaded. In one case a large subscriber to a building enterprise, in order to evade payment, actually became a party to a plan which wrecked the enterprise, and yet no one thought of him as having far surpassed Ananias and Sapphira in his bold act of sin. Experienced collectors are often heard to say that twenty-five per cent. of ordinary subscriptions

should be deducted for "shrinkage," and it is greatly to be feared that the word shrinkage in this case, on the part of many, at least, expresses in a mild form the anticipated holding back of money solemnly pledged to God and his work.

Nor should it be forgotten that money is not the only offering which the Holy Spirit prompts the people of God to bring to the altar of sacrifice. Very many are called to special service, and such calls will in the nature of the case often involve the renunciation of privileges more highly prized than money. The young man may have to abandon the pathway to fame ; the young woman to sacrifice social tastes and prospects almost as dear as life. Many a Christian who has never had money to give away is called upon to sacrifice opportunities which money could not buy, and of vast numbers who have never had money to enjoy it might be said that with true Pentecostal devotion they have sold all and laid the price at their Master's feet. The call to do so comes from the Holy Spirit, and in responding to this call the Christian of to-day should take solemn warning from the fate of Ananias and Sapphira. Very many are sorely tempted to keep back part of the price, while not a few are persuaded to repudiate the whole transaction and carry away from

the very altar of God the offering which they have brought.

We may see from time to time painful illustrations of this grievous error, and nowhere is it more frequent than among those who have been moved by the Spirit to become special messengers of Christ to a perishing world. The young man with brilliant gifts receives such a call, recognizes it clearly and obeys the heavenly vision, but soon finds himself struggling against a two-fold temptation. In the first place he may seek a dazzling popularity, a comfortable life, and a congenial social environment, but with little further thought of the call which God has given him. No burning bush with its awful voice disturbs the quiet serenity of his life. He has not wholly disobeyed, and yet he is keeping back the greater part of his offering.

But the temptation may go farther than this. The preacher, once called and anointed for his work, may fancy that he sees before him, if only he were working on other lines, possibilities of success far beyond anything to which a humble preacher of the gospel can ever aspire, and blinded by ambition and covetousness he may abandon his post, and join the worldly multitude in its mad rush after wealth and fame. In such a case the poor deceived creature takes back the whole

price, and goes far beyond the unhappy pair who perished under the sentence of Peter in the days of the Church of Pentecost.

Men and women who devote themselves wholly to any special calling under a distinct conviction that in doing so they are obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit, should never lightly change their minds and abandon their work. If they have mistaken their calling, God can reveal this to them, but disobedience to a recognized conviction is always attended with peril. Sometimes such persons intend to disobey only in part, but such attempts are vain. The preacher remains in his pulpit but engages in business, and soon his business is his master. One such man, when asked why he did not throw himself heart and soul into his legitimate work, replied, "If I were to do so it would involve a loss of more than five thousand dollars?" And yet this man, who with holy vows upon him had read the story of Ananias and Sapphira a hundred times, dreamed of no danger in keeping back nearly the whole price of his offering!

"But," it may be said, "the judgment which fell upon these two never attends such transactions now." Very true; nor was the fate of Nadab and Abihu repeated at every turn of Jewish history, and yet the stroke even in our day is not

wholly withheld. The visitation of physical death is less terrible than the spiritual blight which falls upon the heart and soul of the unfaithful and dishonest disciple. Every reader of the New Testament is familiar with the fact that men and women bearing the Christian name may be dead while still living—"Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." The saddest moral wrecks to be found on the face of the earth are those who have made shipwreck of faith. A man is seen standing with an idle group at a village street corner, regaling his hearers with worthless stories, or listening to worthless gossip. His life is a failure, and he is best known as a man without principle, and utterly wanting in veracity. Who is he? In his youth he was a preacher of the truth. Another is seen flying from place to place, full of plans and projects; grasping, struggling, now succeeding and now failing, but in the meantime losing character, friends, prospects, and finally money, until at last in old age he appears as the very incarnation of disappointment and failure, standing on the brink of eternity, and yet with scarcely enough moral power in him to enable him to devote a thought to the future. Who is he? A man who in youth was called with a holy calling to speak for God, and who obeyed for a season, but later in life was

lured away from the pathway of duty, sought the prizes offered by the world, was deceived, tried again and again only to be deceived more and more, until at last we see him left without enough manhood to denounce the world which has betrayed him. Ananias may have committed a greater sin than this man, but if so, the principles on which divine justice is administered in this world, and in all worlds, are not clearly understood.

A man with a withered hand becomes at once an object of pity and compassion, but a man with a withered soul is in a worse plight—ten thousand times worse. We meet such men, and at times they almost seem to abound. If they preach, the word from their lips seems lifeless and powerless. If they pray, their petitions are mere forms of expression. They have no access to God and no power in prayer. Among their fellow men they move without sympathy, and are seldom the objects of either esteem or love. They are living, and yet are dead. It has not always been thus with them. They once lived a better life, and walked not only in love and affection with man, but in love and fellowship with God. The exact fate of the two victims of the tragedy of Pentecost has not overtaken them, but in the clearer light of the world to come it will probably be seen that the single sin of Ananias and Sapphira was venial

indeed, when weighed in the balance against a long-continued course of similar transgression.

May the Father of mercies have compassion upon us all, and rouse the modern Church to a realization of the startling truth, that our God is still "a consuming fire."

Chapter XVIII

UNITY OF BELIEVERS

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"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."

John xvii. 21, 22.

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul."

Acts iv. 32.

The devout reader of our Saviour's final prayer with his disciples must often think sadly of the wide gulf which seems to separate between the ideal Church of Christ and the real Church as it exists in the world to-day. The union of believers was undoubtedly the culminating thought in that wonderful prayer, but when we look abroad over the Christian world of to-day, we are compelled to confess sadly that few traces of such a perfect and exalted union as that for which Jesus prayed, are at first view visible among those who bear the Christian name. The subject has not been overlooked, but on the contrary has received abundant attention; but if not overlooked, it has certainly been greviously misunderstood, and it is to be feared that most of the efforts made to promote this hallowed Christian grace, have tended to hinder rather than help the cause of vital Christian unity.

The union for which Jesus prayed was essentially spiritual and vital, and it is not credible that any one among his hearers could have possibly understood the words to apply to forms of organization, questions of doctrine, precedence in rank, dates in history, or to any other question which did not connect itself directly with the spiritual life of the believer, and especially with the great bond of common love to a common Saviour and common Father, by which all believers in earth and heaven are united together. In our day, however, nine-tenths of those called Christians view the question wholly as it connects itself with these incidental and relatively unimportant considerations. Absurd and humiliating as it may appear, it is nevertheless a painful fact that thousands of the best educated men in England to-day view the question as connecting itself wholly with a transaction on paper, which must take place between a distinguished ecclesiastic in Rome, and other ecclesiastics in England. The same earnest men are also persuaded in their minds that millions of men and women who are undoubtedly recognized by Christ himself as true disciples, must give a formal adherence to certain traditional statements, and go through a form of outward conformity to doctrines and usages which have never yet been found to pos-

sess any spiritual vitality whatever, in order to realize the meaning of our Saviour's wonderful prayer. Going eastward we find many millions belonging to ancient churches, all contending earnestly for the right of precedence, and all equally unwilling to concede that there can be any general union of Christian believers except on a basis of complete surrender of all the contestants to one particular party. No one seems able to perceive what ought to be clear to the vision of any child, that even outward union is hopeless while such an attitude is maintained, and yet the whole world looks on and is expected to believe that this is an earnest contest for the sacred principle of Christian unity.

If we come nearer home, and confine our inquiries to those known in general terms as evangelical Christians, we are again confronted by the most curious, and in some cases painful, misunderstanding of the extremely simple terms of our Saviour's prayer. It is a singular and very instructive fact that in cases where good men have made a specialty of the subject of Christian unity, and have denounced all sects and denominations as unscriptural, the very evil against which the protest is made, is fomented and increased rather than lessened by the opposition. The most insistent advocates of the visible union

of all Christian believers very often become, by a process which seems unsuspected by themselves, the most exclusive of partisans. Again and again the singular phenomenon may be witnessed of Christian men devoting a lifetime to denouncing the divisions which exist in the Protestant world, only to find at the close of life that they have added one or more new sects to the too numerous organizations which they found around them at the beginning of their labours. Indeed, it may be accepted as an invariable rule, that all attempts to insist on merely outward union, exert an influence against the real unity which our Saviour had in view, and which was happily realized in the Church of Pentecost. It is believed by most persons who have had good opportunities for studying the subject, that a most encouraging growth in the spirit of true Christian unity has taken place during the present generation ; but the most superficial observer must see at a glance that this advance has been brought about, not by attempts at articles of union written on paper, but by devout Christians on their knees calling upon a common Father in heaven, and trusting in the common Elder Brother in whose name they draw near to the mercy-seat.

We need not be left in doubt for a moment as to what our Saviour meant in his farewell prayer

with his disciples. He did not refer to anything which was unattainable, nor did he look forward to the distant future when his high ideal might be realized among believers on earth. The time was at hand when this blessed spirit of unity was to be illustrated in the lives of living men and women. The practical meaning of these memorable words was clearly exhibited to men and angels, when in the Church of Pentecost the whole multitude of disciples lived from day to day a life of love, and peace, and purity, which enabled the historian to say of them that they were all "of one heart and one soul." These Christians lived in the wicked city of Jerusalem. They lived among enemies, and were watched and suspected in their public and private life. They were subject to all the temptations which are common to servants of God in a world like ours, and yet they were able to exhibit in their daily lives the full meaning of our Saviour's wonderful prayer. They were one; they were one in their love for Christ and for one another; one in their faith and devotion to the service of God; one in the spirit of sacrifice which animated them; and one in the hallowed affection which seemed to make the whole Church one vast family circle.

We are not to infer, however, that this blessed unity which affected the lives of these good men

and women at so many different points, in any way interfered with the individuality of any believer. We do not read that they were one in opinion. What their views were concerning many of the questions which have agitated the minds of modern theologians we have now no means of ascertaining; but it would have made no difference if Philip had given special prominence to free moral agency, while Stephen seemed more impressed with the conviction that he was moving in harmony with agencies which had been predestinated from all eternity to co-operate with him in his work. It is rarely a good omen to find Christian teachers making light of Christian doctrine; but on the other hand it cannot be doubted that the insistence upon agreement in all important subjects, and upon many which are not important, by many of our modern churches, has worked no good and much evil. The thoughtful student of theology who is accustomed to respect conscience in study as well as in action, instinctively revolts against mental restraints which were unknown in the Church of Pentecost.

Nor was the unity of these Christians in the Church of Pentecost one which interfered with the ordinary avocations of life. It is evident that most of the people continued to live in their former homes, and we find no reference whatever

to a general abandonment of their pursuits; nor can we suppose for a moment that individuals found their personal tastes materially changed, in any respect, by the change which came over their moral natures when they received the enduement of the Holy Spirit. The union was one of the heart, and we may see in the world around us a thousand illustrations of the fact that persons of different tastes and different dispositions may yet live together in perfect harmony. Indeed, it sometimes seems as if a special affinity is often discovered between persons who are opposites in character. A husband and a wife may be opposites in their personal tastes, and yet be perfectly united in guiding their family, and through long years of life on earth they may live together without a jar to their peace, without a note of discord to remind them of any personal unlikeness, and without an hour's cessation of the love and faith which they plighted to one another in the days of their youth. The same phenomenon occurs constantly among Christians. The love of Christ seems at one time to conceal differences until they become invisible, and at other times to make these differences add variety to the common life which is led by those who might have been expected to find personal association intolerable.

As a matter of fact we may often find among devout Christians illustrations of this law as striking as those which occur in the family. Men who differ in all things else are found often living in perfect harmony as Christians. Two men may belong to different political parties, may have different social tastes, and may engage in widely different pursuits, and yet in the Church of Christ they will be found living together, year after year, in bonds of unbroken affection. Friends wonder at it, and sometimes pass a remark on the subject, but do not pause long enough to remember that only a miracle of love brings about the result. When this love becomes a common bestowment from above, implanted by the Spirit of God and maintained as a living power from day to day, and from year to year, the prayer of our Saviour does certainly seem to refer to a state of things in our age. As a matter of fact that marvelous prayer is realized by many believers on earth to-day. We would perhaps search in vain to find any considerable number of Christian disciples united together in a single organization like the Church of Pentecost, of whom it could be said that they were all of one heart and one soul ; but while we cannot find such an aggregate of believers, we do find all over our poor world very many Christians who realize in their daily lives

the full meaning of our Saviour's prayer. Such Christians are meek and lowly in heart; they are unselfish, in the practical sense of that word; they prefer one another in honour; they think no evil, and offend not with the tongue. Speaking for myself I may say that through a long and somewhat varied experience I have not met many such Christians, and yet I rejoice to be able to say that I can recall no period in my life when I did not know some to whom these words would apply. I have known some men and women for years who have never had their feelings hurt by the omissions or slights of friends, who have never had a grievance to complain of, who have never been offended, and with whom it has always been impossible for the most contentious persons to maintain a quarrel. They are always at home with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. They find something good in every sermon, gain some strength in every prayer meeting, and are refreshed in spirit where others complain of dullness and languor.

While it is true that the unity to be sought is not that of harmony of opinion, or agreement concerning plans of labour, yet it is a remarkable fact that diverse and even discordant views are often harmonized in a wonderful way under the influence of special manifestations of the Holy

Spirit. This is especially true in matters relating to the common interests of the Christian community. In such cases the union of heart and soul may always be expected to influence the mind and will, and hence it will usually be found that spiritually minded Christians strive to be of one mind, so far as plan and purpose are concerned. In such cases there may be a change of opinion on the part of some, a spirit of concession on the part of others, and a recognition of divine leading on the part of all, which makes it easy for the whole company to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. If the Christians of the present day could become of one heart and one soul, in the primitive sense of these words, the divisions of Christendom would soon cease to cause grief to the friends, or joy to the foes, of the Christian faith. As long as organization continues to be a law of life, Christian believers may be expected to form organizations both for mutual well being and common service; but the idea of such organizations becoming rivals, much less opponents, must soon become too intolerable for longer sufferance.

It is a sad fact, but one which can hardly be questioned, that even among what are sometimes called "advanced believers," the subject of Christian unity is hardly understood. The unity

for which Jesus prayed cannot share its room in the heart with jealousy, or envy, or personal dislike, or petty enmity, or personal ambition, or any of the great brood of personal grievances which the average Christian is too prone to tolerate, or, it might be said in some cases, to cherish. If an evangelist, for instance, insists upon absolute submission on the part of others, but will concede nothing himself; if the leaders of a revival are jealous in petty matters of precedence; if prominent leaders of holiness meetings are found disputing by the way in a spirit not wholly unlike that which disturbed the first disciples on a certain notable occasion; if leading exponents of doctrine cannot agree, and if the pure milk of the word often seems to turn sour in their vessels, while their teaching yields neither sweetness nor nourishment, the inference is unavoidable that the parties concerned have as yet failed to grasp the full meaning of the Pentecostal measure of blessing. No possible "success," no possible measure of "blessing," can compensate for the absence of the peculiar grace which makes all believers in deed and in truth one in Christ Jesus.

It is impossible to place too high an estimate upon the practical value of these hallowed Christian graces. We all preach Christ, but too often forget

that if we would have the world give heed to our words and become convinced of his divine mission, we must exhibit before the gaze of men that greatest of all moral miracles,—the actual union of holy men and women in a bond which makes them, amid all the toil and turmoil of daily life, of one heart and one soul. Hear our Saviour pray;—"I pray for them . . . . that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. . . . . That they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me." We cannot expect,—we have no right to expect,—that the world will accept our testimony concerning Christ, while we lamentably fail to exhibit in its blessed fulness the power of that hallowed name to unite us in a living and loving fellowship which impresses all beholders, because it is not earthly but divine.

The power of prayer, the very meaning of united prayer, can never be fully understood by the Christian world, till the unity of the Church of Pentecost becomes a common experience among multitudes of those who bear the Christian name. While it is still blessedly true that one lonely prophet on the mountain-top may summon the winds and the storm cloud by calm prevailing prayer, yet the praying power of the Christian

world must be that which goes up from united hearts. The supplicants must "agree," must be of one heart in desiring, of one purpose in asking, and of one faith in expecting a response to their petition. If added power attends the prayer of two or three, what transcendent power may we not expect to attend the prayer of a hundred, a thousand, a million believers? If all true believers on earth could only unite, not in repeating the words merely, but in uttering from the heart and bearing it as a daily burden on the heart, the first petition of our Lord's Prayer—"Thy kingdom come,"—the nations would be shaken, and the kingdom of God would begin to advance with mighty strides towards universal triumph.

The attainment of the unity of Pentecost would duplicate,—nay, add ten-fold, to the working efficiency of any company of associated believers, who have become accustomed to the ordinary experience of mingled accord and discord which too generally exist in the modern church. If my missionary brethren will pardon the personal reference, I will venture to say that it has of late become deeply impressed upon my mind, that the weakest spot in their work is found here. I do not intimate that they are more defective than other Christians, but they have abundant need to be in advance, and to rise above the low standard

which prevails in the home churches. They of all men need to be of one heart and one soul. The comparative isolation in which many of them live, and the close personal association with fellow missionaries into which they are brought, have a tendency in many cases to call attention to personal peculiarities in an unpleasant way, and the result is that while a measure of love and unity prevails in the several little communities, it is not wholly after the pattern of the Church of Pentecost. The missionaries preach and teach, and do what they regard as their duty faithfully enough, but their testimony cannot impress the multitudes around them as it would if the conditions laid down were fully met. The mission station, of all places, should be a miniature of Pentecost. Its little community should live in personal fellowship with Christ; they should breathe an atmosphere of love; they should walk in the light of God, and ever impress those who know them best as belonging to a kingdom which is not of this world. If all the missionaries of the world could to-day be made of one heart and one soul according to the standard of the Church of Pentecost, the change would be equivalent to an immediate reinforcement of a thousand, or perhaps I ought to say of ten thousand, fully equipped new workers.

The best hearts in the Christian world to-day are yearning for a fuller manifestation of the love of Christ in the hearts of believers everywhere. This desire has been implanted by the Spirit of God, and should be cherished as an earnest of better things to come. God is calling to his people everywhere, not only to live as disciples of Christ, but to love as such. Surely it is not too much to hope or to expect, that a great revival of the spirit of fraternal love is at hand, and that this will in its turn usher in a mighty work of salvation among the world of unbelievers. A return to the modern church of the spirit of sweet unity which pervaded the Church of Pentecost, will mean a return of the power with which the very name of Pentecost is associated in every Christian mind.

Chapter XIX

CHRISTIAN COMMUNISM

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And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need.

Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessed of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according as he had need.

Acts ii. 44-45; iv. 32, 34, 35.

The organization of society is a subject which has been beset with peculiar difficulties from the earliest ages, and these difficulties seem to increase rather than diminish as the race advances in civilization and intelligence. In the political, industrial, religious, and social world alike, unsatisfactory conditions have always prevailed, and still prevail. The dumb millions of earth, if given a voice, would not by any means always speak words of pleasantness and peace. Wealth shows a tendency to become tyrannical, liberty to become licentious, religion proscriptive, and politics corrupt and corrupting. In a world needing workers everywhere, millions starve in what seems to be enforced idleness. At every rich man's gate sits one or more representatives of the Lazarus of the parable. War is still the arbiter of nations, and if not more brutal, is still in its essential

spirit as murderous as in the days of human savagery. In England multitudes grovel in vice and deepest poverty; in America the tramp and the beggar have overspread the land during the present generation. The groans of the poor are ascending from every Christian land, and the ablest and the best thinkers of the age seem to fail utterly in their efforts to solve the great problem of a satisfactory and permanent organization of human society.

It might have been expected that a great reformer like Jesus, one who came to proclaim ultimate truths, to teach men their whole duty to their fellow men, to unbind burdens, to open prison doors, and to proclaim a law of liberty and love for all mankind, would have dealt in a practical way with this problem of the ages, by giving the race a framework for the organization of society on a final and satisfactory basis. Had Jesus been less than divine, he might very possibly have attempted something of this kind; but his method was very different. He taught great principles; but unlike Moses he gave the world no code of laws. He knew that the truths which he taught would eventually transform society, but he was too wise to provide a rigid framework for a society which must be ever changing. He introduced a new life into the world,

but left that life, according to the law which governs all life, to build and develop character on a model of its own. The invisible something which we call life, hidden in the seed, will build in its own way, and in time fashion a stately tree, but all the wise men of earth would fail if they attempted to construct a model according to which this life must build. Jesus not only taught great truths, but came to bestow a new life upon the world, and this life he gave in abundant measure. The transformed character, wherever it is received, begins to contribute in a measure toward the ultimate transformation of society. We thus see that in the very nature of the case the full and final adjustment of social problems, and the removal of the disorders of society, can only take place when all men everywhere become subject to Christ's law of holiness and love. Sin is the disturbing element of society, while love is the law by which a saved world will yet be able to live in sweet and abiding harmony.

It must be evident to the most superficial observers of current thought, that social questions have been coming more and more to the front during the past quarter of the century. Magazine literature is full of the subject; the lecture platform and the pulpit alike give it prominence; politicians begin to notice it, timidly it is true;

and yet in a way which shows that they dare not longer neglect it. Associations of a hundred kinds have been formed to promote some interest, real or supposed, of the general question ; but in the midst of all the theorizing, and debating, and lecturing, and preaching, to which we are treated, it must be confessed that up to the present date all parties have failed to indicate any basis or plan upon which society could be reconstructed. Intelligent men everywhere feel instinctively that the question is beyond them. A score of failures can be quoted on the part of earnest and enthusiastic men who, often at great personal loss to themselves, have tried on a small scale, by creating a miniature world of harmony and thrift, to show what kind of a world ours should be. Among other cases which are sometimes thus quoted, is the alleged failure of the first disciples in the Church of Pentecost.

I have used the word "failure," but do not for a moment concede that the example furnished by the Christians of Pentecost was in any sense a failure. Some good people are disposed to apologize for the first Christians, by assuming that they were simple-minded men with an honest purpose, but without the practical knowledge or skill which such an experiment demands. Others again have called attention to the fact

that they paid dearly for their temerity by pauperizing the Church, and by encouraging a spirit which made the Christians of Jerusalem for many years the beggars of the East. We do not, however, find any facts upon which to base such assertions as these. What the early Christians did was simply to follow implicitly the law of love which had been implanted in them by the Holy Spirit. Some of them possessed houses, others lands, and others goods of various kinds; but all alike were ready when they saw brethen and sisters in need, to share with the needy to the full extent of their ability. The language of the narrative is somewhat misleading, especially to a careless reader, but it is clearly evident that there was not a general sale of all manner of property by all the members of the infant Church. It is definitely stated that while men continued to "possess" property, they refrained from calling it their own. They simply were acting in strict accordance with the Saviour's teachings, and regarded themselves as God's stewards, holding in trust certain forms of property for their Master. The needy around them were many, probably owing to the fact that very many of the new converts were strangers, and so common was the sight of men selling their property, and placing the money at the disposal of the apostles for their brethren in need,

that it could truthfully be said of the community that they had all things in common ; but in his reprimand to Ananias and his wife, Peter distinctly reminded them that the property had been their own, and that they need not have sold it if they had not so chosen. It thus appears that these good men and women were governed absolutely by the law of love, and the result was a beautiful picture of true Christian character, such as our world has rarely seen in later days.

The difference between the spirit which animated the Christians of Pentecost and that which forms the battle cry of the modern communist, is as absolute as the difference between heaven and earth. The communist demands his full share of all the wealth in the community. His gospel is one of demand for self. The Christian of Pentecost, on the other hand, contended only for the right to bestow his goods upon others. The one party seems ever to be grasping at the possessions of others, while the other party is seeking with equal earnestness for the high privilege of giving to others that which belongs to himself. Thoughtful persons become alarmed when they think of millions of half maddened and desperate men, threatening to pull down the very pillars which support society in their mad effort to equalize the wealth of society at large ;

but on the other hand the faintest suggestion of fear vanishes from every mind and heart, when mention is made of earnest men and women whose greatest desire in life is to share everything of value with their fellow creatures.

In the spirit and practice of those early Christians there was nothing which in the most remote degree was calculated to pauperize the community. The Church at Jerusalem, which at a later day became somewhat noted as the recipient of alms from the whole Christian brotherhood of Europe and the East, was a different body altogether. There may have been special circumstances which would account for the indigence of those later Christians, if the facts could be discovered; but be the cause what it may, the Church of Pentecost was animated by no such mean spirit, and its pure and noble example has been a benediction in every age, through all the centuries which have followed. If the spirit which animated those saints of God could be breathed into the hearts of all who in our own day bear the Christian name, the work of transforming the world would soon seem to have commenced in earnest. So far as we can now discover, no better method for reconstructing society has yet been suggested to the Christian world, than that which was illustrated at Pentecost. If our world is to be made

Christian at all, it must be after the same pattern which was exhibited in the beginning. The spirit of self-sacrifice must be an active power among the living men and women who bear the Christian name. Not only must houses and land, silver and gold, bonds and stocks, be given up for the welfare of Christian brethren and sisters, but life itself must be held subject to any emergent call which may be made upon it. The Christian is taught that, as his Master freely laid down his life for him, so must he be ready to give his life for the brethren. This is the meaning of Christian devotion. It is a devotion which must be illustrated in the lives of Christians everywhere, and if so illustrated it becomes a mighty power in the moral and social world.

But the thought is no doubt occurring to the reader that the brief episode which occurred in the history of the Church of Pentecost, while beautiful and suggestive as an illustration, yet belongs to a far-off era, and even if reproduced in our day could accomplish but little in solving the gigantic problems which confront us. It is a mistake, however, to think of this event as belonging alone to an age for ever gone by. The story has been brought down to us not merely that it might serve as an illustration, but to reveal to us our own possibilities. Bands of believers at a

million different points on the globe, might within twenty-four hours bring back again to earth the scenes of the Pentecostal morning, and the power of the Pentecostal Church. Instead of one Church of Pentecost, there might be in this our own favoured day, a million of equal power and equal purity, startling nations, and blessing the whole human race. A million such churches would very soon put a new meaning into the discussion of social problems. Hopefulness and confidence would take the place of perplexity and discouragement, while the helpfulness which would be developed everywhere, would go very far towards taking the bitterness out of the lives of millions, and putting the whole social problem upon a new footing throughout Christendom. All questions might not be finally settled by such a movement, but for the first time in history the factors which enter into the solution of the great social problem would begin to be understood.

A well known literary gentleman asked a missionary in a public meeting at New York, why he did not receive converts by the thousand when they offered themselves, and thus give them all the advantages of Christian nurture without delay. "When I was a boy," replied the missionary, "in the days when we had to make our own bullets, I learned that before I could make the bullets I

must melt the lead." It often seems as if hosts of wise men in our day are attempting the impossible task of organizing society on new lines, and giving it new forms, without first making it plastic by what might be called a melting-down process. Men and women must be changed in character, radically changed, before human society can be reconstructed. As long as selfishness is the controlling principle of men and nations, our poor earth will continue to be the scene of ever-recurring disorder and trouble. It is useless to appeal to the State, or to fancy that better laws will cure all social ills. The State is but an aggregate of individuals, and until the individuals which compose it are changed in spirit it will be unable to afford any material relief. Christian men and women; that is, men and women who possess, and in their lives illustrate, the spirit of Jesus Christ, alone can do for our world what many fondly dream can be accomplished by the State. When the whole vast mass of living humanity becomes so far leavened by the Spirit of Christ, as to be subject to truly Christian influence, very great changes may be expected to take place in the framework of society; but what those changes will be, and how they will be brought about, no one can predict, and perhaps no one can conjecture; but very few thoughtful persons

can be persuaded to believe that the present state of things can continue permanently, while the millions who have been taught to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom on earth, instinctively look forward to a final triumph of their King, and a reconstruction of society on lines dictated by the spirit of universal love.

Christian communism differed from all other systems which in later days have borne that name, in that it was kind, tender hearted, considerate of the poor, and helpful to the helpless. It is one thing to fight for the rights of labour, it is quite another thing to strive to see that the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered, and the widow and the orphan cared for. In the Church of Pentecost every one in need became an object of immediate care, while the company of dependent widows became so numerous that a special organization had to be provided to meet their wants. Who were these widows? Whence had they come? and how had they become dependent on those first Christians? It is difficult to believe that they were all relatives of the first converts. No explanation of their presence is given, but it would seem more than probable that those early Christians, filled as they were with the love which had animated their Master when on earth, felt instinctively drawn to care

for a class of people who above all others were needy and dependent. A possible illustration of the question thus raised has recently occurred in certain missionary circles in India. For a dozen years or more it had been noticed that the question of providing for widows was forcing itself on the attention of certain members of one of the leading missionary societies in North India. At first applications for providing relief for widows, and more especially permanent homes for them, were received with little favour. It did not seem to be missionary work, in the proper sense of the word; but in the meantime the conviction seemed to grow in certain minds that it was an obligation which could not be set aside. The number of applicants increased, and every year the question presented itself in a more imperative form. The famine in 1897 added to the gravity of the situation, and it was soon discovered that indigent widows to the number of several hundred were knocking at certain missionary doors for admittance. What was to be done with them? To send them away seemed impossible, to receive them seemed almost equally impossible. No missionary appropriation had been made for them, and no provision for their wants could be discovered.

At this point the precedent of the Church of

Pentecost was brought to mind, and there seemed a certain parallelism in the two cases. Whether those first widows in Jerusalem had all been converted before they were received into the community as dependents upon the bounty of the disciples, we cannot tell, but these widows in India all came expressing a willingness and even a wish to be received as Christians. The more the question was discussed, the more the conviction seemed to take shape in the minds of those responsible for the final decision in the case, that the widows could not be sent away without grievously offending against the law of love which Christ had enjoined, and which the Holy Spirit had written upon the hearts of the missionaries.

A careful survey of the modern Church does not impress one with the thought that even the most evangelical of Christians in our day are following closely in the footsteps of the first disciples. The care of the widow and of the orphan is hardly recognized at all by the churches as such. A collection may be made now and then for the poor fund, and in cases of special need Christian charity may be dispensed in a proper spirit and with a free hand; but every church organization should partake of the character of a family. The joy and sorrow of one should be the joy and sorrow of all. Communism becomes

a sacred term when it is used to express the common interests, the common feelings, and the common hopes of each one in a community. In no family on earth could we conceive of such a thing as part of the children being full, while others were habitually hungry; nor could we think it possible that some of the children would be clothed richly while others were almost naked. There might be personal differences, it is true, and these might be somewhat distinctly marked; but if love does not unite all upon a common level, it certainly forms a bond of union which renders it impossible for any members of the common communion to be wholly neglected. Hence every church should provide for its own widows and its own orphans. If this were done there would still be ample need throughout Christendom for great orphanages and houses of refuge for the widow and the stranger; but so far as those connected with a modern Christian Church are concerned, they should be provided for by those who are members of the little community to which they specially belong.

It is inevitable that a church, even when it begins its career among the poor and the lowly, will in time seem to grow away from these classes. This is not owing to any lurking social pride among the members, but solely to the fact that

every Christian community rises, as if by a natural law, in intelligence, culture, and social influence, but all Christians should see to it that social elevation and prosperity do not prove a snare to them, or to the church with which they are connected. All Christians have a mission to the poor. No one bearing the name of Christ can afford to be unlike his Master. We should become the joyous burden-bearers of universal humanity. The poor prisoner, the orphan, the widow, the sorrowing, the tried and tempted, the falling and the fallen, the sick and the dying, the stranger and the outcast, these are the classes among whom the Master moved, and toward whom he was always drawn. It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord. In this blessed sense Jesus of Nazareth was the Communist of the ages.

Chapter XX

SOCIAL LIFE AND WORSHIP

XX

SOCIAL LIFE AND WORSHIP

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

"And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people."

Acts ii. 42, 46, 47.

A single glance at the brief history of the Church of Pentecost makes it very evident not only that there was an active social life among the membership, but that this was one of the most prominent features in the organization of the little community. "All they that believed were together." Whether in the temple or in their several homes, their association was of the most intimate and affectionate character. The Church was apparently an enlarged reproduction of the family. A holy relationship united the people in a bond which was as real, and in some respects almost as strong, as that which united the members of the several families in separate households. The affection which was felt and manifested among the people, was very much like that of kindred. Indeed, as a matter of fact, they were kindred, united together as sons and daughters of a common Father, and bearing the name and moral image of a common Elder Brother. In view of

this relationship we see a beautiful consistency in the remarkable social life which was witnessed in this first Christian community,—a life which must have been the more striking because of its contrast with the rigid social conditions which prevailed among the caste-bound Jews of that age.

It does not appear that any Gentiles were included in the membership of the Church of Pentecost, except those belonging to alien races who had adopted the Jewish faith, and were known as proselytes. No one had been excluded, but no one had as yet applied for admission to the church. While nearly every nation had representatives among Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost, these had all become members of the Jewish community by conforming to the laws of Moses, and formally professing the Jewish faith as it was then known throughout the world. Some were recognized as Greeks, it is true, but these were mingled with the rest, and no line of demarcation separated them from those who were Hebrews by birth. The social conditions were therefore not unlike those which prevail among devout Christians of England and America at the present day. Artificial barriers did not stand in the way, save such as were created by differences in culture, wealth, or social standing. Whatever these may have been, it is

evident that they gave way before the all-pervasive spirit of fraternal affection which was one of the fruits of the indwelling Spirit. Within the limits of the new community, caste lines were wholly obliterated. The disciples associated together freely and constantly, frequented one another's homes, dispensed and accepted hospitality without grudging and without questioning, and thus set before the world a beautiful picture of social life such as perhaps has never been fully reproduced in later times.

This remarkable social phenomenon must have been the more impressive because of the striking contrast which it presented to the best phases of social life among the Jews of that age. It was an age of social friction and intense partisan feeling. Sect was arrayed against sect. Friendships were narrow and selfish, and enmity bitter and unrelenting. The poor were slighted or oppressed, the neglectors of the Jewish ritual were classed together as despised sinners, and the servants of the Roman Government as social outcastes, while the religious system of the era had become an intolerable burden both to life and of conscience. A deep and solemn gloom had settled upon the people, and their social life had perhaps never presented fewer attractive features than at this period. In such a city as Jerusalem then was,

and in the midst of such a society as was then found there, the little Christian community must have presented an extraordinary spectacle, and we need not wonder that for a brief time the disciples became the subjects of a remarkable but dangerous popularity. They were held in "favour with all the people."

We very naturally are prompted to inquire concerning the details of this social life, but the story is told in barest outline, and we only know that the people were closely associated together; that they lived in wonderful harmony; that religion was intimately blended with their social intercourse; that a law of general and generous hospitality prevailed among them; and that the poor were not only freely recognized, but their personal wants were admitted as a legitimate claim upon the bounty of the community. Our knowledge of the practical details of their daily life is thus very limited, and it is no doubt well that it is limited. Had it been ordered otherwise; had a minute account of the daily family routine been recorded, a multitude of ordinary incidents would long since have been accepted as sacred precedents, and instead of having the spirit of the hallowed little community held up for our imitation, we might have been burdened by artificial standards of social life resting upon no authorized basis, and

wholly wanting in adaptation to the wants of people living in different eras and under varying conditions. What we need to-day is to study the spirit which pervaded the Church of Pentecost, and to note the main outlines of social life which distinguished the new community not only from the Jewish people, but from every other civilized community which the world has ever seen.

A single glance at the inner life of the Church of Pentecost makes it abundantly evident that it contained no nook or corner for the social recluse. The unwritten law of our social nature is revealed in striking characters in the composition of every group which we see in that anointed community. No one lived or tried to live to himself alone. Very many upright persons shrink from society, and seek in solitude that peculiar life which they find most congenial to their own tastes and feelings, and such persons often fall into this error through the mistaken notion that in holding aloof from their fellows they are exhibiting a meek and quiet Christian spirit; but no such persons were found among the first Christians. Personal tastes count for very little when the whole being is consecrated to Christ, and every Christian is under a personal social obligation to such fellow believers as are providentially near him. We might, indeed, put the case much more strongly, and say that

the rule is of wider application. The Christian should cultivate kindly relations with all men. He wrongs himself and he wrongs his neighbours when he declines to maintain neighbourly relations with them. It would add immensely to the power of the Church of Christ to-day, if all believers were to exhibit to the world the cordial and warm social intercourse which formed so prominent a feature in the life of the first Christian Church.

To complete this beautiful picture of free social intercourse, we must add the generous rule of hospitality which seems to have prevailed among the people. Some difference of opinion has existed among Bible students as to the exact meaning of the phrase, "breaking of bread." Some maintain that it refers solely to sacramental services, while others understand it as applying to the free hospitality which was dispensed, with possibly the Lord's Supper held in connection with it. Without pausing to enter upon this discussion at any length, it may be sufficient to remark that the expression, "did eat their meat with gladness," is one which could not have been appropriately applied to a memorial of their crucified Lord, with all the solemn and even sad associations which were connected with the rite. Whatever else may or may not have been included in the statement, we cannot doubt that the believers were frequent

partakers of a free and bountiful hospitality, and this formed a very striking feature of their social life. Such a hospitality is what might have been expected in a community so pervaded by a spirit of love and friendship as were the Christians of Pentecost, and the striking picture which we have of the new community would have been very incomplete without this feature. In all communities, even among savages, joyous occasions are always marked by common feasts, and public holidays, weddings, family reunions, and all manner of joyous gatherings become festive occasions. The feast is a joy token all the world over, and has been in all ages. The first Christians were a joyous people, and their daily lives were so full of joy, that a free interchange of hospitality is precisely what might have been expected under the circumstances.

The so-called progress of modern society is not wholly favourable to the cultivation of the virtue of hospitality; for it should never be forgotten that it is a Christian virtue. It is not only commended but commanded in the New Testament, and can no more be lightly thrown aside than one of the Ten Commandments. The tendency to escape the burden of household cares, the artificial style of living which artificial life demands, the growing expense of a hospitality which is losing

the simplicity that is its greatest charm, and the rigid exactions of so-called society, are all operating seriously against both the letter and the spirit of what ought to be known as Christian hospitality. Such a hospitality ought to be both generous and general. Without interfering with the sacred rites of the family circle, or the association of kindred, in every church all classes should frequently eat the bread of gladness together with singleness of heart. I recently visited a London church in which at the close of a weekly service refreshments were served in an adjoining room. A church in Calcutta has for many years maintained the custom of providing light refreshments at the close of two weekly meetings, which all attendants are at liberty to partake of, and the informal gatherings which thus follow the public meetings are often more owned and blessed of God than the meetings themselves. If all classes are welcomed alike to such gatherings, not only rich and poor, but, more important still, saint and sinner, the simple hospitality which is offered will seldom if ever fail to carry a blessing with it both to those who give and those who receive.

At the sacred table of our Lord, rich and poor are expected to meet together on a basis of perfect equality ; but if this is the only occasion when they can thus meet together, the spectacle

will fall very far short of the precedent which was set for all time in the Church of Pentecost. Every Christian church should have a representation of the poor among its membership. No church can afford to do without the widow, the orphan, and the poor. When these three classes are all absent, the church practically ceases to be Christian. Its Bible is marred with blank spaces scattered all through its pages. Few persons are aware of how large a portion of God's word is devoted to these children of affliction, and the misguided church which aims to maintain a sanctuary for a select few of earth's favoured ones, not only becomes guilty of a glaring inconsistency, but loses an inheritance of priceless privilege and blessing. A mixed assembly of believers representing all classes, from the poorest to the most wealthy, is often a scene of exceptional social enjoyment, and by the exercise of a little wisdom and tact such a blending of associated Christians can be accomplished without any special difficulty. I was recently present at a popular reception which was tendered to a very prominent clergyman, and to which by special request of this good pastor the entire membership of his church, including many poor had been invited. Everything was in the best style, the attendance was exceptionally large, the party was a great social success, and the

presence of the humble poor added much to the interest of the occasion. It did not lessen the interest in the least, to have it reported quietly that a poor woman had been overheard making the remark, that she was partaking of ice cream for the first time in her life.

The free social intercourse of the first Christians did not lessen the sanctity of the home life. The home is a relic of Eden, and among Christians should ever be regarded as a hallowed family sanctuary. The spirit of modern worldliness is almost openly hostile to all that is holiest and sweetest and best in this truly divine institution, and now more than ever before the spirit of Pentecost must be invoked to protect this sacred shrine from profanation. So far from having the home made less sacred by the free social intercourse which prevailed among the people, it was the family institution with all its holy associations which made such a social life possible.

What was the order of worship in the Church of Pentecost? God be thanked that no one can answer this question, else we should all have long since been hopelessly bound to ritualistic forms wholly unsuited to our own times. The people waited diligently upon the apostles for teaching, and were devoted to "prayers," no doubt both in public and privately. In another chapter the

nature and necessity of the teaching given to the first converts is discussed at greater length, and it may suffice to remark here that all new disciples, no matter how cultured they may be in other respects, stand in urgent need of careful instruction in nearly all that pertains to the spiritual life. As for the prayers mentioned, it is certainly worthy of remark that hardly a single paragraph of the prayers which have been heard for centuries in Christian churches, had then been written. The prayers of those hallowed days must have been very simple, both in word and the range of thought, and they must also have been indited by the Holy Spirit to an extent but seldom witnessed in modern services. It would seem that all were alike devoted to a life of diligent inquiry and prayer, and a close and intimate "fellowship" or personal association existed between the converts and their spiritual leaders. The word fellowship, as used in reference to this association, must not be understood as conveying any mystical meaning. The apostles had knowledge, experience, and wisdom quite in advance of the great body of the disciples, and this was freely imparted to those who gathered around them. That which was shared freely by both parties was held in a common partnership, or fellowship.

The prayers spoken of would seem to have

been those of associated believers, but no doubt private as well as public prayer held a very prominent place among the people. The apostles asked for leisure to devote to the ministry of the word and prayer, and it is evident that the obligation of earnest prayer was recognized by everyone. These first Christians were a praying people, and a due regard for prayer must be accepted as one of the features of any modern association of believers aspiring to walk in the footsteps of the believers of Pentecost. Prayer is distinctly a Christian exercise, and every true church of Christ ought to be an organization of praying people. In the closet, at the family altar, in every home of affliction, in the prayer meeting, and in the public sanctuary, the whole body of believers should be as ready to pray as to sing. A weekly prayer meeting attended by a few dozen persons is of course much better than nothing, but such a meeting would have seemed strangely out of place if it had been held in the upper room where the Christians of Pentecost received their anointing. We are living in an era of highest privilege, and God's promise in its fulness is ours to-day, assuring every church and every individual that He will pour upon his people the spirit of grace and supplication, and Christians everywhere should be known as a praying people. Two stated

prayers on Sunday, and three or four at a week-night meeting, fall very far short of what we might rightfully expect from a praying people.

A striking illustration of the marked absence of the spirit of prayer in modern Christian assemblies, may be witnessed with each annual return of the week of prayer. The programme which is usually observed is so wanting in the elements which enter into united prayer, that it had often been remarked that the term "week of prayer," is a misnomer; instead of being a week of prayer, it too often becomes merely a week of speeches. The universal Church of Christ has not yet learned how to pray with that union of faith, purpose, and feeling, which characterized the first believers. Subjects are allotted to persons who are to lead in prayer, and these topics are discussed in a manner which partakes largely of the form of public addresses, and only in a minor degree does the element of prayer enter into the service. The idea of united prayer throughout the world, should be that of united millions, and tens of millions, lifting up heart and voice before the common mercy seat of all believers, and when this ideal is fully realized we may expect to see blessings from above sent down in response to the cry of pleading millions, which shall in very deed shake the nations.

It may be safely assumed that in connection with the fellowship spoken of in the Church of Pentecost, there were many meetings partaking more or less of the character of what in recent years have become somewhat widely known as social, or fellowship meetings. If no other evidece pointed to this conclusion, it might be inferred from the fact that in our own age, and indeed in every age, the free outpouring of the Holy Spirit always leads to this peculiar form of spiritual service. This may readily be accounted for when we remember that it is the mission of the Spirit to testify of Christ, and this testimony is usually present in the form of grateful recitals of the abounding mercy, the saving power, and the ever active love of Christ, as revealed in the hearts of believers. Meetings in which this kind of testimony holds a prominent place, as is stated in another chapter, partake of a prophetic character, and, if genuine, are invariably attended by marked manifestations of spiritual power. The old-time Methodist class-meeting was in its best days a fellowship meeting, and thousands of little assemblies all over the world to-day partake of the same character, although not conducted with the same formality. It goes without saying that such meetings must be free from rigid formality, and also free from external constraint. Compulsion is fatal

to the very idea of such a fellowship. Next to the stated ministry of the word, there is perhaps no spiritual duty or privilege of more supreme importance to the Church than the free testimony of the general body of Christian believers to a risen, living, and present Christ.

Chapter XXI

THE BIBLE OF PENTECOST

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THE BIBLE OF PENTECOST

If any group of modern Christians of average intelligence were asked to define the relation of the Bible to the Church of Christ, it is probable that a majority would at once reply, that the former is the foundation on which the latter stands, and that the Christian Scriptures and Christianity are inseparable. The Bible has been called the "religion of Protestants", and the reverence with which it has been held by the Protestant world since the days of Martin Luther would seem to justify such a title; but the words must be received in a very qualified sense. The inspired word of God is a powerful ally to the Church, and is essential to its best interests, and perhaps to its permanent vitality; but Christ himself is the true foundation of the Church, and this fact should never for a moment be forgotten when we are considering the character and claims of the scriptures. To illustrate this truth, we have only to remember that the Church of Pentecost, the purest body of Christian believers our world has yet seen, did not possess in writing a single line of our present New Testament. The man who was to write nearly all the doctrinal portions of the

book was as yet a bitter enemy to the followers of Christ, and nothing could have seemed more improbable than that he would in later years become the theologian of the Christian Church. The Church of Pentecost was certainly not founded upon our modern Bible, especially in its present form; but it must not be too hastily assumed that it possessed no inspired teachings on which to rely, or that no part of our present Gospels were known to the first Christians. The Church of Pentecost very probably possessed a larger portion of the sayings of Jesus than are found in the New Testament of to-day, and in addition to this had access to the whole of our Old Testament, with portions of which they seemed to be perfectly familiar.

It is probable that our Saviour in most respects adopted the usual style of oriental teachers. His greatest sermon was delivered while seated on the grass; and another great discourse was delivered while seated in a boat, with his audience standing on the beach. Before beginning his address in the synagogue of Nazareth, he sat down, and his great prophetic discourse on the last days was delivered while seated on the Mount of Olives, with Jerusalem in full view before him. He was more of a teacher than a preacher, and, like all oriental teachers, did not hesitate to repeat his

lessons as often as occasion called for them. Not a little labour has been wasted by harmonists in attempts to explain seeming discrepancies in the accounts given of these discourses. Many of these variations can be accounted for in a moment when we remember that our Saviour not only repeated his lessons over and over again, but that he very probably took no pains to maintain absolute verbal uniformity in repeating a parable or expounding a truth. Teaching in this manner in an age when few could read or write, it may be accepted as certain that a class of hearers who, like similar persons in illiterate countries at the present day, acquire a remarkable power in memorizing what they hear but once or twice, must have gathered selections of the sayings of Jesus and rehearsed them to others gifted in like manner, until in time every community of disciples would have one or more reciters of the Master's teachings. We can thus readily see how the words of Jesus must have been accurately recorded on many tablets of memory, and how after his death and the rapid increase of disciples, the demand for such reciters must have led to a large increase in their number. In this way, and, it might perhaps be added, only in this way, can the points of agreement, and also of ever-recurring divergence, found in the three Gospels, be

accounted for. The historical incidents interwoven with the teachings of the Master had no doubt gained currency in the same way. Each reciter would state the fact as it had appeared to him, or as it had been stated to him; and in an age when critical methods were unknown the variations were left unchallenged, and in fact were of no practical importance.

When Bishop Taylor visited India as an evangelist in 1872, he soon became noted for his habit of repeating some of his sermons, with but slight variations, verbal or otherwise. While he was preaching in Bombay I met a young girl of oriental parentage who had frequently heard him, and was equally amused and surprised to hear her repeat whole sections of his discourses. She could do this with wonderful accuracy, and apparently without any special effort. While living in a remote station among the Himalayas I once met two young girls, apparently about fifteen years of age, who were unable to read a single word in any language, and yet who could repeat long village epics hour after hour without hesitation, and apparently without any break in the story. In the absence of the printed page it is probable that such oral records are passed on form one generation to another, especially among people who have made permanent progress in

civilization, and are gifted with some degree of mental activity.

We can thus readily see that the Church of Pentecost must have been wonderfully favoured in having among its members many who had heard the Master's teachings from the very first, and who were perfectly familiar with his daily life and his leading doctrines. His very words must at times have been imprinted on many minds in characters which time could never efface, and it is very probable that those early disciples not only possessed all that has come down to us through the medium of the four Gospels, but much more. It is certainly a striking fact that when Paul reminded the Ephesian elders of the "words of the Lord Jesus," he quoted words which do not appear among the recorded sayings of our Lord which have come down to us. Our Saviour taught the people everywhere, and taught almost constantly, and we may accept it as certain that in our own New Testament we have little more than the fragmentary remains of the discourses of Him who spake as never man spake.

But we are less interested in the amount of inspired Scripture to which the Church of Pentecost had access, than in the manner in which it was used. The Holy Spirit had descended on the waiting disciples, and a great audience had been

collected together, when Peter was prompted to rise and address the people. He had become a new man; a new spirit had been given to him, and he spoke with amazing power. Without apology, without explanation, without a word of attempted proof, he appealed to the words of one of the oldest and most revered of the prophets, and proclaimed that the mysterious prediction of ages long gone by was now fulfilled in their presence. He spake like a man of authority; he quoted freely from the prophetic psalms, and expounded their hidden import in a way which utterly startled his hearers. He proclaimed the risen Jesus as enthroned at God's right hand in heaven, and as the One who had shed forth the Spirit which was to renew the hearts of men, and in time renew all the kingdoms of earth. In a moment the whole question of inspiration had been placed on new ground. It was no longer a question of possibility, of theory, or of history, but of present fact, of direct and active spiritual agency working under definite conditions, and producing certain definite results. The Holy Spirit had recognized certain portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, had put a new and fuller meaning into them, and had given them a power such as has never yet in the whole course of human history attended any other writings of mortal man.

The words of Joel, and the more recent words of Jesus, had alike been recognized by the Holy Spirit, and had thus been made the medium of an enlarged revelation of God's will, and man's obligation and privilege.

The question of inspiration should always be treated as one of facts. We speak of certain material substances as conductors or non-conductors of electricity. An electric current can be sent a vast distance through a copper wire, but it cannot be carried a single inch through a medium of glass. God's Spirit employs God's word as a special medium through which to convey truth to human minds and hearts; and although he does not use it as the sole medium in such communications, yet he employs it in a special sense, and in a measure in which he employs nothing else. The seal which was put upon the inspired word at Pentecost has been affixed in like manner, and often with like attendant power, to similar proclamations of divine truth, a million times since that eventful morning. Whatever may be said or thought concerning the Bible, whatever theory of inspiration we may adopt or reject, the fact remains that God owns the Book, and to the Church of Pentecost was given the signal honour of first demonstrating this fact in such a way that it can never again be successfully gainsaid.

The presence of the Holy Spirit with the written word, so wonderfully illustrated in the Church of Pentecost, is not to be assumed as operative apart from human co-operation. If the inspired words quoted by Peter with such irresistible effect, had been printed and merely distributed among the people, it is not probable that any such effect would have followed. God does no doubt often bless the printed page, but rarely in such a way as to dispense with the personal co-operation of living disciples. The presence of the apostles with their expectant faith was a necessity on that eventful day. In the work of saving the world God co-operates with man, and to refuse or withhold human co-operation is to reject God's revealed plan for accomplishing this supreme purpose. The world cannot be converted by distributing Bibles among the heathen. The prophecy of Joel would have remained almost buried in obscurity to the present hour, if a company of believers had not put themselves in a position where the Holy Spirit could apply it according to the divine purpose, and thus bring to light its hidden meaning and reveal its amazing power.

The inspired word of God is an agency of wonderful power when thus co-operating with believing and obedient disciples. In the Old Testament it is represented as an agent sent forth

upon a specific mission, and clothed with power to insure its success. "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah lv. 11). In the New Testament it is clothed with even greater power—"For the word of God is quick (living) and powerful (energizing), and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews iv. 12.) On the lips of Peter the word of God must certainly have seemed clothed with this kind of power. It carried conviction to many hearts; it revealed the guilt of those who a few weeks before had been clamouring for innocent blood; it illuminated minds which had been shrouded in darkness; it clothed weak and timid men and women with power; and it brought startled souls into the immediate presence of the living God, and made them tremble as if in full view of coming judgment.

We who live in these closing years of the nineteenth century may learn some needed lessons from the manner in which the Christians of Pentecost received and used the Word of God. First, we may note the fact that they were not in bondage to the letter. The Scriptures were

quoted with a remarkable degree of freedom, no attempt being made to give a reproduction of the very words, but rather a forcible statement of the leading thought to which reference was made. The reverence for the letter of Scripture which is so marked in many Christian circles, is really of Jewish origin, and does not seem to have entered into the thought of the early Christians. Quotations from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament were made without any special regard to verbal accuracy, and of course no theory of verbal inspiration could have been upheld for an hour in that favoured era.

In the next place the progressive character of revelation was not only illustrated anew, but the power of the inspired word when illuminated by the Spirit to present old truths in a new light, marks a new era in Christian doctrine and in scriptural interpretation. Some of the Psalms were so adapted to Christian uses, and to the presentation of Christian truths, as practically to become new. That which holy sages had dimly seen in the long era which preceded Pentecost, now seemed to burst upon the view on almost every prophetic page of the Old Testament. The Scriptures with which the early believers had been familiar all their lives, in a single hour had seemed to receive an enlarged inspiration. Many illustra-

tions of this are found in the pages of the New Testament, and many also in what might almost be called the instinctive interpretation given by the spiritually minded of every age since Pentecost. The counsel of Elder John Robinson to the Puritan emigrants who were to sail for the unknown wilds of America in the "Mayflower", to look for new light to be revealed to them from the sacred page, was one of the most remarkable utterances which has been heard during the Protestant era. The Bible is a mine of exhaustless truth, and the Holy Spirit in every age assists the devout student who searches its pages for the truth of God as for hidden treasure. What the Spirit did for Peter when preaching on the day of Pentecost, by adapting certain of the Psalms to the character and mission of Christ, the same Sprit has been doing in every age since, by helping millions of believing Christians to interpret other songs of ancient Zion in such a way as to make them sound the praises of David's Greater Son.

Take for instance the seventy-second psalm. We find no clear reference to this ancient song in the New Testament. Critics tell us that it was not written by David, but probably by Solomon; and in any case it is conceded that its original subject was Solomon, and not a future Messiah. Modern criticism has been unrelenting in stripping

this magnificent production of every element which would entitle it to a place among the Messianic psalms, and very recently a devout writer of Sunday-school lessons presented it to his youthful readers as a tame document intended to instruct rulers how to govern their subjects; and yet despite all critics and all criticism, the best spiritual instincts of Christendom will continue to make the seventy-second psalm testify of Christ, and of the triumph of his kingdom. Why? Simply because the Holy Spirit has long since put his seal upon the song, and given it a deeper, and broader, and higher meaning than the Hebrews of Solomon's era could have comprehended.

In like manner the Holy Spirit undoubtedly guides all devout and teachable readers of the inspired word in their search for a knowledge of the mind and will of God. The Spirit's aid is not promised to students of Greek idoms or Greek tenses, as such, but to seekers after truth; and as Peter was enabled to put a new and fuller meaning into the passages which were brought before him, so all sincere readers of other portions of the Bible may expect, and certainly do receive, a light which makes God's revealed word worth much more to them than to those to whom it was first given. The consensus of the spiritually minded believers of Christendom has thus fixed

the interpretation of large portions of Scripture, to which little or no reference is found in the New Testament, and in doing so has so breathed the spirit of the New Testament into the Old, as to make the latter, in some important respects, a new book. The story of Jacob wrestling with the angel; of Gideon and his little band equipped with trumpets and concealed torches; of Elijah among the caves of Cherith, or on Carmel at the supreme crisis of his life; and a large number of the Psalms; have all received an impress from the Spirit of truth which has made them mean infinitely more to a reader of the present day, than they could have meant to a devout Hebrew before the era of Pentecost. The general consensus of spiritually minded Christians is, in the main, a safe guide to the inquirer. The Holy Spirit given at Pentecost is still in the Church, and still guides the lover of truth into all the truth which his best and highest interests require.

With the history of the Church of Pentecost before us, it would be impossible to conceive of those early Christians as engaged in the kind of petty defensive warfare which has occupied the time of too many apologists. If, for instance, some critic had come forward to question the accuracy of the description of the bed on which Og, king of Bashan, slept, and had gravely objected that no

human being could have been nine cubits high; or if another had objected that since no dumb beast possessed organs of speech, the story of Balaam having been rebuked by his ass, is incredible,—Which one of the apostles would have been detailed to answer such objections? We may well asume that no quibbler would have dreamed of entering that fervid circle of anointed believers with such questions; but if any one had done so unlikely a thing, it is probable that the only reply given him would have been, "Well, what of it?" Those first believers did not stake their gospel on immaterial side issues. They no doubt believed that Jonah had been swallowed by a great fish; but the story of Jonah had nothing to do with the work they had in hand, or with the mission which had been given them. Their Bible was as yet incomplete, but they were men of practical common sense, and did not attempt to deal with portions for which they had not a present need. It is a mistake, and a very serious mistake, for Christians in our day to devote too much time to objectors and quibblers. A hundred questions of biblical interpretation remain to be settled, and it can never be safely said that Christianity must stand or fall with the record of isolated events which have long since ceased to be of any practical importance.

Another important lesson to be learned from the manner in which the teachers of Pentecest expounded the word of God, is that of avoiding the too common practice of putting strained and wholly unauthorized meanings into quotations from the sacred writings. Too often in our modern churches devout hearers are obliged to listen to expositions which are purely fanciful, and the same frailty is extremely common among some modern writers. The men of Pentecost were robust expounders of the word of truth, and allowed no latitude to the play of fancy; nor did they feel any obligation laid on them to find hidden meanings in passages which did not plainly convey a direct lesson to the reader. We cannot conceive of such a thing as Stephen preaching a series of sermons on the Song of Solomon, not because the Holy Spirit moved him to do so, but because he perceived that the book was not very generally read, and feared that its inspiration might in time be questioned; nor can we think of such a thing as Barnabas selecting texts for exposition from the first nine chapters of First Chronicles, not because God had given him a message to the people from those ancient records, but solely because he wished to emphasize the fact that all scripture was profitable for wholesome doctrine. It is perhaps a natural, but none the

less a vain thought, for poor mortals to attempt to strengthen the buttresses of the inspired Scriptures by insisting that every verse and every line is a special revelation from God, equal in importance and authority to every other verse and line in the book. It does not make the book of Esther any more spiritual, nor any more manifestly inspired, to select texts from it for Sunday discourses. The Holy Spirit can defend and take care of all the Scripture which he has inspired, and he will not fail to put his seal upon every truth which he wishes the men of this generation to receive.

"But is not the whole Bible inspired? Can we dispense with a single page or a single verse of the book? Are we to understand that in the Church of Pentecost certain portions had been discarded?"

No, it certainly does not appear that any portion had been discarded, but only such portions were used as were adapted to the time and the place, to the occasion and the audience. A long reef may contain gold in every portion; but parts have never yet been explored, while other parts have been worked over, and have yielded their treasure to men of an earlier generation. The whole reef is a gold-bearing quartz, but practical and sensible miners will work in those places where they can best get access to the treasure. A youth who had been awakened to a sense of

his guilt as a sinner, went for counsel to a friend, who wisely advised him to read and study the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. What could we think of an adviser who should send such a youth to read and study the seventh chapter of First Samuel, in which he would find a detailed account of Saul's search for his father's asses? The question involved in such a case is not one of inspiration, relative or absolute, but of practical common sense; and common sense is one of God's precious gifts which can never be safely ignored.

God's revealed truth is to a certain extent imbedded in historical statements dating far back in the annals of the race, and much of this history has been manifestly copied from official records, such as seem to have been kept by all Eastern monarchs in ancient times. Some portions of this history possessed a certain importance in a far-off age, but are of only incidental value, or even interest, to believers of the present day, and yet they form a portion of the reef in which is found the fine gold of living truth, and are not to be treated with either indifference or contempt.

The believers of Pentecost rendered two valuable services to their successors of all ages. They made some precious contributions to the Bible, which are now the common heritage of the human race, and they showed the preacher, the teacher,

and the devout seeker after truth, how to use the inspired word. They demonstrated the vitality and power of that word, and pointed out to the Christians of all ages the secret of success in preaching Christ and his gospel. Happy indeed will be the life of any modern church which learns the secret of walking by the same rule, and using the sword of the Spirit with the same divine skill and power.

Chapter XXII

ELEMENTARY CHURCH POLITY

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The Church of Pentecost was not disturbed during its brief history by any discussion of questions of church polity. No mention of the subject appears in the brief history of the Church, and it is very probable that even the thought of such a question never occurred to the simple minded men and women who composed the membership. This is the more surprising in view of the fact that the circumstances seemed to call for special care in effecting and maintaining an organization. This was the first Christian church, and it might have occurred to its responsible leaders that it would probably be regarded as a model for later organizations, and that everything done or left undone would probably assume the authority which precedent quickly gives; but no considerations of this kind seem to have disturbed the people, and leaders and followers alike quietly accepted the duties of the hour as from day to day these were presented to them. The Church did not lack organization, but it was provided with no constitution or bye-laws, it knew nothing of questions of precedence or order, and it contemplated no change of procedure. Its organiza-

tion was in a way spontaneous, and the authority of its leaders was instinctively recognized, but does not appear to have been at the time formally assumed. The ideas of these first Christians were so primitive that no doubt if any one so inclined had attempted to introduce the question of church polity, it would have been a somewhat difficult task for him to make his meaning intelligible to the people.

In view of the absence of all reference to the subject, it would seem beyond all reasonable doubt that it must have been the Master's plan and purpose, that the organization of his Church should be left to the providential exigencies which in due time would present themselves to his people. Ecclesiastical and civil constitutions alike must ordinarily be the result of growth and providential developments, and all attempts to provide a framework to which events and tendencies as yet unknown must be made to conform, must inevitably end in failure. The great Christian organizations of all ages have been the products of providential indications given from time to time, and hence we need not be surprised to find that the first Christian Church was launched upon its career with scarcely any plan of organization whatever. A dozen men were recognized as leaders, not apparently by appointment, but by

virtue of the fact that they had assumed the duty of interpreting the meaning of the manifestations of Pentecost, and had appealed to the people to repent and be saved. One of these men had assumed priority of leadership, following probably a precedent which had been established during the Master's ministry. The people who had received the word and been baptized, at once accepted without exception, and apparently with the most absolute confidence and love, the leadership of these apostles, and thus the Church drifted into an organized form without going through any formality in doing so. It became a Christian church, having the ministry of the word and the Christian sacraments, and also having a government and an efficient administration, and yet the spirit of fraternal love so permeated the whole community, that the element of authority was probably hardly felt or thought of by the people. The government was purely "ministerial," as at the outset it must have been, but it did not long remain so.

In our own day a similar procedure is constantly taking place, and must continue to do so until the whole race becomes Christian. The writer of these lines has had official connection with more than a thousand local churches in which the above method of organization was followed. One or

more men appear as preachers, and a score or more of men and women receive the word at their lips and are baptized. These converts instinctively look for further direction to those who bring them to Christ, and it becomes as natural a duty for the strangers to assume the responsibility of guides and rulers, as it would be for parents to assume charge of their own children. Theories of church government count for nothing in the face of practical facts of this kind. The pioneer and organizer must for a time, and within limits, be a ruler, and he should learn to rule wisely and well. Nor need any one be surprised or alarmed at this assertion. Before the close of the next century a million churches—possibly many millions—will be organized, in what are called heathen lands, on this same basis. An outgrowth of this kind is inevitable, and scriptural as well, and should excite no manner of misgiving in any mind or heart.

This earliest and simplest form of church government manifestly rested upon the consent and approval of the people, nor did Peter exercise any authority independently of his brethren. In every case the apostles seem to have acted together in perfect harmony. It is worthy of note, too, that when it was found advisable to make over certain financial interests to seven laymen, these rulers of the church very wisely asked the general

body of believers to nominate suitable persons for this duty, and only gave those named a formal appointment after they had secured this mark of approval from the church. This no doubt seemed like an unimportant incident at the time, and probably attracted very little attention ; but beyond all doubt it marked the introduction of a vital principle into the government of the church. It was a recognition of the principle of representative government in the Christian Church, and a precedent which was to affect civil government as well in later times.

While it is very true that the founders of Christian churches in non-Christian communities must as a general rule assume the administration of church affairs, yet such control should always be distinctly assumed as temporary only, and laymen should be admitted to a share in the government at the earliest possible day. The precedent established by the apostles in the Church of Pentecost should be accepted as binding in all ages and in all countries. Questions of personal right and privilege do not affect the case so much as the more vital question of benefit to the church, and the wisdom of making a sensible division of labour. The apostles based their proposal on the latter ground exclusively. They could have administered the finances, but other duties of greater

importance required their exclusive attention, and hence they asked to be released from this somewhat harassing responsibility.

We here see a distinct line of demarcation drawn between those interests which were spiritual, and those which were what, in modern phrase, would be called "secular." The fact that several of the men who were first set apart to manage the finances subsequently became able ministers of the word, does not lessen the importance of the earlier arrangement by which a certain number of men asked to be released from business cares that they might be able to give themselves wholly to "the ministry of the word and to prayer." The moral instincts of intelligent men and women in every age recognize the wisdom, to say nothing of the necessity, of maintaining this distinction. A man who affirms that he is called of God to the ministry of the word, and who solemnly registers in public a vow that he will give himself wholly to this duty, can never again dabble in secular business, or become an operator in the semi-gambling speculations of the business world, without a sacrifice of spiritual power, to say nothing of moral influence and personal reputation. Few persons are aware how fatal mistakes of this kind have been to large numbers of Christian ministers, especially in the United

States, during the past thirty or forty years. Hundreds upon hundreds have made shipwreck of their ministerial character, while a still larger number have been shorn of their spiritual power, and condemned to go halting through life, simply because they persisted in attempting the impossible task of serving two masters. In view of the sad results which so often are conspicuously seen attending such attempts, it is amazing that so little attention has been called to this subject. Indeed, it is hardly recognized as an evil or a danger at all. Again and again the spectacle has been witnessed of great ecclesiastical bodies apportioning their official appointments, many of which are of a secular character, to ministers only, and it has on some occasions been noticed that the keenest ministerial competition seemed to be for positions which manifestly ought to have been given to business men.

If it be objected that the seven men set apart to manage church finances were formally ordained by the laying on of hands, and thus became the pioneers of a distinct order in the Christian ministry, it is sufficient to remark that the ceremony of laying hands upon persons about to be inducted into office did not always by any means carry with it the idea of appointment to the Christian ministry. One of these very men had

hands laid upon him a second time, long after he had been entrusted with the most responsible ministerial duties, when about to set out from Antioch with young Saul of Tarsus on his first missionary journey. It was a very appropriate thing for the church at Antioch to do, but the ceremony added nothing whatever to his ministerial standing. The early Christians had been accustomed, as Jews, to see a similar ceremony performed when men were to be inducted into very obscure offices, and it no doubt seemed appropriate to them to observe a similar formality in this case. The idea that the laying on of hands must involve in every case a solemn ministerial ordination, is a modern notion which is not supported either by direct affirmation or recorded precedents in scripture.

So far as the general subject of church polity is concerned, the two chief lessons which are to be learned from the example of the Church of Pentecost are ;—first, that no framework was furnished by our Saviour to his disciples according to which all ecclesiastical bodies in all ages were to be organized ;—and, secondly, that in each age and in each nation Christians should carefully and prayerfully study the tokens which God in his providence gives them, and adopt the polity which seems to give promise of the best results.

In trying to do this wise men will soon discover that growth is a law of being, in the church as in the individual, and hence we need never expect to find a perfect church, adapted to all coming ages. A provision which is admirably adapted to the wants of the present generation may be unsuited to the next. New methods, new resources, new forms of organization may be called for, and while a fondness for change is to be discouraged, a fear of all change is equally to be deprecated. Christian work is so varied, it reaches out in so many directions, it touches so many interests, that a flexible polity is needed by every organization bearing the Christian name. When a given plan or church usage, which has long been manifestly blessed of God, seems in spite of all efforts to the contrary to be losing its hold on the people, it should not be too hastily assumed that this is a sign of waning spiritual life. It may be that, but on the other hand it may be an indication that God would have us put something better in its place.

Take as an illustration, the "class meeting," a well known institution among Methodists. After long years of unchallenged usefulness this means of grace has for a generation past been slowly but certainly losing ground. This may be a sign of spiritual decadence, or it may be a token from God that something better is needed. It may be,

and very possibly is, a providential reminder that the class meeting does not fully fill the place of an intelligent, faithful, and trained sub-pastorate in the Church; or, in other words, that it does not provide a practical oversight of the whole membership. A weekly meeting of a band of faithful Christians is a good thing in itself, but it cannot be made to accomplish all that is involved in a full and thorough exercise of pastoral care.

The Church of Pentecost stood alone in the midst of a hostile world, and hence we have no means of learning what its attitude would have been toward sister organizations if such had existed. In the absence, however, of the direct intimation which such an example would have furnished, we may safely assume that the responsible parties would have felt themselves at liberty to use their best judgment, and would have followed what seemed to them the clearest tokens which God had given them. If each church had retained an independent government, God would have accepted and blessed this polity; but if on the other hand they had decided to effect an organic union, the same heavenly Father would have smiled upon that arrangement. The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, nor is a peculiar form of church polity that which constitutes the legitimacy of a church.

Organization, however, there must be. Organization is a law of life, and a living church cannot dispense with it. Nor can the most successful aggressive work be done without it. What particular form of church polity may prevail when our world becomes a Christian world, can neither be seen nor surmised ; but of one thing there seems to be no doubt whatever ;—until the world is converted, the universal Church should be regarded as a militant body, and in the unremitting efforts which should be made to win all nations for Christ there should be organization of the most effective kind. It matters little what official titles may be given to leaders, nor is it important that uniformity of organization should be observed, but the main point should never be overlooked. The militant hosts of our victorious Leader should be organized and drilled for service ; for only in this way can they be led to such victories as the crisis demands, and such as God himself has taught us to expect.

Chapter XXIII

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

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SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Human beings are so constituted that in many things they are accustomed to depend upon the leadership of their fellow men. This is seen not only in the obedience and trust rendered to their chief by savages, but also among civilized people of every grade. It is seen in the industrial world as well as on the field of battle; in social movements as well as in political contests; and is as conspicuous among spiritually minded Christians as among the children of this world. In the Church of Christ active leaders are needed, not only to make an effective organization possible, but to take charge of the various kinds of work which may always be expected to grow up around a body of well-organized and active Christians. Such a body of believers, united by a bond of common faith and common love, and animated by a normal measure of spiritual vitality, may always be expected to develop leaders enough, not only to meet their wants, but in many cases to send forth help to those in greater need. It is a grave symptom in the condition of any church to discover that it has no power to develop Christian leadership, and it is a marvel that some of our

modern churches view without alarm their want of ability to raise up their own leaders. Some are even disposed to boast that they depend on other communities to supply preachers for their pulpits. It has been reported of one prelate that he felt no humiliation in remarking that more than half of his clergy had come to him from other Christian denominations. To make the matter worse, young men are practically offered bribes to forsake their own familiar altars, and accept more lucrative positions among strangers. Of course it is a preacher's duty to go where his own enlightened convictions direct him; but it is a significant, not to say humiliating, fact that among these changes of ministerial service it seldom happens that those who make the change do so at the cost of any pecuniary sacrifice. In nine cases out of ten, personal interest and changes of ecclesiastical relations seem to move in harmony.

In the Church of Pentecost there seems to have been no lack of power to develop leadership, and no question of personal advantage could have been raised in the case of those who were advanced to positions of honour and trust. It is a remarkable fact that of the eleven original apostles who belonged to this church, only three are mentioned by name in the book of Acts after the first morn-

ing of Pentecost. On the other hand five persons who began their career as laymen, not only rose to prominence among their brethren, but became leaders of remarkable power, and occupied positions of commanding influence in after years. It would seem as if Peter himself had been eclipsed in service, if not in fame, by some of these new men ; while John, if more prominent in later years, was not at first so quick to see and grasp opportunities as some of his less favoured lay brethren. A few of these notable men are worthy of special notice. Foremost among them stands the first illustrious martyr,

STEPHEN.

Of the previous history of this notable man nothing is known. He first appears among the laymen chosen to the office of deacon, but it was as a preacher that he seems to have rapidly risen to a leading position. So far as we can judge from the brief narrative of Luke, in a comparatively short time Stephen had become the foremost speaker and the ablest debater of the Christian community. We know very little of his character or work, save that he was spoken of as a man full of faith and power, and filled with the Holy Spirit. As a preacher he was aggressive, and his opponents found themselves wholly unable to "resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke." He was evidently a saintly man of fervid temperament,

and it is easy to believe that when he appeared before the council his face was lighted up with a glow which reminded those who saw him of their ideal of the shining face of an angel from the better world. Stephen had irritated his hearers by defeating them in argument; but it is evident that his special offence had been that of proclaiming the doctrine taught by his Master at Jacob's well. He was accused of speaking against the temple and against the law, and especially of proclaiming that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple. It is evident that he had advanced by longer and more rapid strides than even the eleven apostles. He had caught a glimpse of the spiritual nature of God's worship, of the wideness of God's mercy, and was impressed with the thought that instead of a building on a little Judean hill, the temple of God was high as heaven and vast as the universe. Heaven was God's throne; earth was his footstool;—Why then talk of building a house for the Almighty, or making an earthly temple for his dwelling place?

We need not wonder that such a preacher and such preaching led to an arrest, a public trial, and a judicial murder. It would seem from the fragmentary report of the trial given by Luke, that Stephen had only entered on his defence, and was reciting certain notable events in the history of their fathers as a kind of preface to his address,

when his glowing mind caught a glimpse of the wider freedom and more spiritual nature of a believer's privilege. Standing within the very confines of the temple itself, he cried out that God did not dwell in temples made with men's hands, and proclaimed that the whole wide universe was God's temple ; but he was rudely interrupted by his exasperated audience, who refused to hear him further. Then came the supreme testimony of this noble martyr. The hour of his release was at hand; the Spirit of God filled his heart; his lips were touched by an invisible coal from heaven's altar; and with glowing countenance and with glowing words he told his hearers of the open vision which God was giving him. He saw heaven opened ; he saw his Saviour Christ not only living, but glorified. There was no longer any place for argument. Testimony, living, burning testimony, was his last great resource ; and while his maddened enemies were still more exasperated, yet the burning testimony of Stephen was boldly given, and has been sounding down the ages ever since.

There was much in the character of this man which was new to the world. It is no wonder that such a man had rapidly risen to pre-eminence in the primitive Church. His life, together with his mental and spiritual gifts, gave him prominence among his brethren, while his name and fame have

been household words throughout the Christian world ever since the morning of his death. But it was not the fact that he was the first martyr alone which has made the Christian world throughout past centuries linger fondly over the story of his death. To Stephen was granted the double honour not only of being the first martyr, but the first servant of God who had ever shown the world how it was possible for a good man to love an enemy. Like his Master, he died praying for his murderers. Happily for Christianity, to say nothing of humanity, that prayer has been repeated a myriad times since, but it was given to Stephen to utter it for the first time. All through the Old Testament history the love of revenge, and the desire for revenge, had been accepted as perfectly consistent with the service of God. Jesus had taught a better doctrine, and had illustrated it in his own death ; but it was not until Pentecost had burned the teachings of Christ into the hearts of his disciples, that our poor humanity could both accept the doctrine of universal love, and illustrate it, as Stephen did, in the bitter hour of a terrible death.

It is very probable that Stephen was the unconscious human agent which was chiefly used by the Holy Spirit in convicting Saul of Tarsus of his great sin, and of the startling error of his religious views. A young man named Saul stood

by as a witness while Stephen was murdered. A few weeks later this young man, with his heart still full of hatred and murder, was suddenly arrested by the power of the Holy Spirit, received a special rebuke from the risen Christ, and became an obedient disciple. God usually employs human agency in carrying conviction to sinful men, and it is evident from the story of Saul's conversion that he had been for some time vigorously fighting against convictions implanted in some way in his heart. Saul had heard Stephen preaching in the temple enclosure, and must have heard him time and again. He had been among those who had clamoured for his blood, and calmly stood by as a witness of his execution. To those present it no doubt seemed that the most dangerous man in the Christian community had been put out of the way when Stephen was murdered ; but God who was looking down upon the scene, had already marked out one of the murderers as a still more notable successor to his faithful martyr.

BARNABAS.

After Stephen, the most prominent place in the Church of Pentecost must be conceded to Barnabas. He was the only person whose advent into the little community receives special mention in Luke's brief sketch. He was from Cyprus, and evidently had been a man of some reputation be-

fore his conversion. He sold his property, paid over the money into the common treasury, and took his place in the affectionate circle of devoted believers. In a short time he appears as one of the seven deacons selected to look after such interests as interfered with the spiritual duties of the apostles. His name in the meantime had become changed, according to a custom introduced by the Saviour himself, from Joseph to Barnabas, or, the Son of Exhortation. Exhortation was one of the gifts of the Spirit bestowed in connection with the Pentecostal anointing, and it is probable that this good man excelled in the exercise of this very valuable gift and thus earned his title.

After the dispersion of the first Christians Barnabas next appears as introducer of the new convert, Saul, to the apostles, and here we catch a glimpse of the greatness of the man. Peter, James, and John, together with the whole body of the early Christians, were afraid of the man in whose presence Stephen had been murdered; but Barnabas received him as a brother, and by his earnest assurances persuaded the others to receive him also. Meanwhile Peter went down to Joppa; saw his vision; was called to Cæsarea; witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Roman household; returned to Jerusalem and defended himself successfully against his narrow-minded

brethren: but neither Peter nor his brethren took a single step toward entering the door which had thus been set wide open before them. The next door of access to the Gentiles was opened at Antioch; and when it was decided to send some one to care for and advise the Antioch converts at this supreme crisis, Barnabas was the man chosen. He was the man for the hour. His heart was big enough, and his mind broad enough, to enable him to appreciate all the bearings of his difficult task. He was able to see the hand of God in the work, and thenceforth rejoiced and moved forward with confidence. He succeeded in his mission, and to him must be assigned the honour of having organized on a permanent basis the first church composed of both Jewish and Gentile converts. That which gives its chief importance to the work of Barnabas on this occasion, was the fact that the Church at Antioch seems to have become the model on which the organization of Christian churches was accomplished throughout every city of the Roman world. It was necessary that this task should be done, and well done, before the great missionary work which was to follow under the leadership of Paul, could be initiated. In mastering this problem Barnabas succeeded not only in putting the Church of Antioch upon a safe foundation, but opened a door of access to the whole Roman world.

It is one of the marks of genius that it enables its possessor to detect genius in others. Napoleon surrounded himself with marshals some of whom were almost equal to himself. General Grant selected his military leaders with almost equal precision. Barnabas had not long been in Antioch until he determined to go in person to see if Saul could not be induced to join him. He perceived at a glance that the converted young Pharisee was just the man for the time and the place; and to make sure of securing so valuable a worker he went in person, found him in his native town of Tarsus and soon returned with him to Antioch. In due time the call to special service followed, and the great missionary movement of the ages began. But it was Barnabas and not Saul who initiated it. To him was given the leading place by the Holy Spirit, and when the two set out upon their first tour Barnabas was manifestly not only the senior, but the leader of the enterprise.

But what about his rupture with the great Apostle of the Gentiles? Simply this, and nothing more; that he differed in judgment from his young colleague. John Mark was evidently quite young, and had failed in his duty at an important moment. Paul determined to cast him off altogether, but Barnabas, who saw the great possibilities which lay in the future of his young relative,

wisely refused to give him up. It was simply an example of two good men differing in judgment; but Barnabas was clearly right, and Paul as clearly wrong. By saving John, Barnabas saved to the Church and to the world one of the most prominent Christian leaders of the first century,—one who was to become the author of the second gospel; the (probable) founder of the important church at Alexandria; the private secretary of Peter; and finally the beloved and highly valued attendant of Paul in his old age.

The name of Paul has probably been regarded with more reverence throughout the Protestant world, than that of any other person except Paul's Master. Hence to many it has seemed almost profane in Barnabas to have ventured to differ with so holy and inspired a man; but Paul was quite as human as Barnabas. It is sheer folly to call attention, as some writers do, to the fact that Barnabas disappears from history at this point. His part of the work was finished. He was an older man than Paul, and his special task had been that of forming a permanent basis for the organization of Gentile churches, and initiating Paul into his life work. How highly he was appreciated by his great associate may be seen by an incidental allusion to him at a time when mischief-making interlopers from Jerusalem were stirring up trouble

on the question of the right or wrong of eating with the Gentiles. Peter had weakly yielded, and Paul rebuked him to his face, but did not seem greatly surprised at his conduct. It was otherwise, however, with his colleague, of whom he wrote, as if in sad surprise, "Even Barnabas was carried away by their dissimulation." [R.V.]

Barnabas, the son of exhortation, won and permanently held a prominent place in the primitive Church. He deserved to take high rank as a good and great man, and it is an incidental tribute to his reputation for ability, that he is one of the very few persons to whom has been assigned the disputed authorship of the peerless Epistle to the Hebrews.

PHILIP.

To Philip belongs the lasting honour of having been the pioneer of a notable body of men, known in every spiritual era of the Church since his day as evangelists. Of his previous history nothing is known. He was one of the seven laymen chosen to fill the office of deacon, and was one of the three among the seven who speedily rose to distinction after their appointment. When the dispersion of the Christians occurred he sought refuge in Samaria, and immediately took the leading place among the hundreds who had gone everywhere preaching the word. He appeared upon the scene at the darkest hour of dis-

tress and gloom, like the gleam of a bright meteor on a dark and stormy night. The Samaritans were by no means hopeful subjects for Christian preaching; and notwithstanding the open door which Jesus had found among them, it is evident that the success of Philip was as much of a surprise as of a pleasure to the apostles. Philip had evidently remembered his Master's express command to preach his gospel to every creature, a command which most persons, in our day as well as in Philip's time, and in mission fields as well as in Christian lands, seem prone to forget. With glowing heart and glowing words he told of Jesus of Nazareth; of his life and death; of his resurrection and saving power.

The despised Samaritans listened with glad surprise, and many of them received the word and publicly professed their faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah and Saviour of men. In one respect, however, the work was strangely incomplete. The Holy Spirit was not given to converts in Pentecostal fullness, and hence the way was not open for the organization of a church at Samaria, or for a permanent prosecution of Christian work. The story of Philip's preaching reminds us of the ministry of the seventy sent out during our Saviour's lifetime; and it is possible that Philip, having been one of the seventy, on

the present occasion simply followed the line of work with which he had been familiar at an earlier period. We must remember also that the situation was novel; that he had no post-Pentecostal experience in such work to guide him; and that he was in a manner feeling his way. A further explanation may possibly be found in the fact that it was important that the apostles themselves should become fully committed to the work among the Samaritans, and that the Samaritan and Jewish believers should thus become united in one fold. Viewed in this light it was as important that Peter and John should be personally associated with Philip in receiving the new converts, as that the Samaritans should have the high privilege of enjoying the ministry of the two leading apostles. Whatever the reason or reasons for the procedure may have been, it was not until Peter and John visited Samaria, and not only preached a fuller gospel to the converts, but laid their hands on them, that the Pentecostal anointing of the Spirit came upon them as upon the disciples at the beginning.

In this age of enlightened and practical common sense, it seems almost incredible that this incidental feature of the story should be seized upon by a great multitude of interpreters as an evidence, not only that certain men who are supposed to

have succeeded the apostles in office, enjoy the high prerogative of bestowing the gift of the Spirit by the laying on of their apostolic hands, but also that the Spirit is not given, and cannot be given, in any other way. Such interpreters forget that no apostle was sent to help Philip in dealing with the Ethiopian convert on the Gaza road, and forget also that this appropriate and impressive form of service has been omitted in the case of millions upon millions of men and women who have since been filled in Pentecostal measure with the Spirit. They insist upon upholding a theory based chiefly upon one exceptional incident. The question is manifestly one of fact. Does the imposition of holy hands produce any effect or not? Can any instance be cited during the past thousand years in which a marked spiritual change took place in connection with this ceremony? On the other hand, is it not a most significant fact that those who have received in fullest measure the Spirit's gift, have done so without any thought of any intermediary agent or any outward ceremony?

The stay of Philip in Samaria was very brief. While it must have seemed to every one that he ought to remain among the converts who had been won by his preaching, God ordered otherwise. The two apostles entered the door which Philip had opened for them, and preached in many

Samaritan towns, while the evangelist was sent upon another mission of an extraordinary character. "An angel of the Lord" directed him to go southward, by the road which passed through a strip of desert between Jerusalem and Gaza. His prompt obedience showed that he had the true spirit of an evangelist in him. We hear nothing about demands for compensation, about plans for organization, about stipulations for the purchase of special hymn-books, about inquiries concerning the size of the town and the union of the congregations, and so on indefinitely. To Philip's mind and heart only one question presented itself: Where does God wish me to go? He obeyed the call, went forth, and in the midst of the desert road found an audience of one person. His Master before him had preached a memorable sermon to an audience of one person, and Philip did not wish to be above his Master. Our modern evangelists have a marked liking for large audiences, and not many of them would waste their valuable time in preaching to a single individual. Philip was a wiser and better man; he preached Christ, baptized his convert, and sent the rejoicing disciple on his way.

In this story of Philip there is less of the miraculous, and less of the unusual, than we might at first glance suppose. The angel of the Lord

probably spoke to him in a night vision, which is another way of saying that he appeared to him in a dream. If so, it may be said that persons in our own time, under circumstances of special need, sometimes receive special intimations from above in a similar way. The direction given by the Spirit to go forward and join himself to the stranger in the chariot, is very much like an incident in the life of the eccentric Lorenzo Dow. When we read that Philip was "caught away" by the Spirit, we are not compelled to believe that he was borne bodily through the air to his next post of duty. The attention of the new convert was diverted in some way, and in a moment Philip had disappeared. The Spirit guided him on his way, and when next heard from he was at Azotus. He reappears again as a permanent resident of Cæsarea, and from the fact that he had now become known as "the evangelist" it is evident that he had devoted his life to this peculiar form of labour.

Our modern evangelists might learn much from the story of Philip. There was nothing artificial, nothing conventional, and nothing perfunctory in the manner of his work. He obeyed God. He was a man of one work. He evangelized. Others might build, organize, teach, rule; but his work was to go as a herald of Christ to arrest attention, to initiate a work of salvation, and to pass on,

leaving to others the task of pushing forward the work which he had commenced. Never in the history of the Christian Church has there been more need of the evangelist, after the pattern of Philip, than at the present hour; but among the many who bear the name, very few indeed seem to retain the Spirit of the evangelist who came forth from the bosom of the Church of Pentecost. Philip used no cards on which names were to be affixed to platitudes; he knew no arts by which to entrap an audience, he did not deceive himself or others by interminable calls to rise up, or show hands, or come forward, or do something—almost anything—to make it seem that something was taking place. But he preached Christ; he walked with God; and his feet were ever swift to run in the way of God's commandments. He could accept a call to a great city or a dreary desert with equal alacrity; and he could go alone where no one waited to greet him; where no crowded halls opened their doors; and where God alone was to be his portion. In these closing years of our nineteenth century our poor world needs a million men and women of like spirit.

James of Jerusalem.

This eminent man has received scant justice at the hands of modern writers, to some of whom he has seemed to have been a rival, if not an opponent,

of Paul, while to others he has stood forth as the chief representative of the conservative party in the primitive Church. He was late in accepting the divine mission of his Brother, and probably only gave up his doubts when Jesus appeared to him in person after his resurrection. He was found among the waiting disciples at Jerusalem, and became thus a partaker of the first outpouring of the Spirit on the morning of Pentecost. Universal tradition represents him to have been a man of strict, if not ascetic habits,—an observer of the law of Moses, as were all the members of the Church of Pentecost, and also of the later Church in Jerusalem ; and as a man of deep piety who was much given to prayer. As bishop, or overseer, of the Church at Jerusalem, he became in some respects the most influential man in the Christian world, and it is a noteworthy fact that when Paul speaks of the three "pillars" in the Church of Jerusalem, he assigns the first place to James.

It does not seem, however, that there is any ground whatever for assuming that this good and great man was a leader of the Judaizing party, or that he was a man of narrow views and illiberal tendencies. On the other hand he appears to have been open to conviction, and quite able to take broad and liberal vews, of new questions. In his celebrated "sentence," or official opinion,

given in the face of the dispute which had been raised by the conservative party at the time when Paul and Barnabas visited Jerusalem, we have an example of broad liberality which, from the lips of a scrupulous Jew, is simply amazing. In fact, this opinion is altogether too liberal for very many intelligent Christians of the present day. Not a few foreign missionaries insist on exacting more rigorous conditions of Church membership from their converts, than James proposed in the council at Jerusalem. Placed in a most difficult position, and having to meet new issues and deal with men of very discordant views, to say nothing of ungenerous feelings, this first Christian bishop discharged his duties with great wisdom, and proved a successful administrator.

It is perhaps natural, but none the less unfair, to identify a man's views with the prevailing sentiments of those who accept him as their leader, and this has been the chief cause of the mistaken judgment which had been passed by so many upon James of Jerusalem. In his letter to the Galatians Paul speaks of certain fomenters of trouble "who had come from James," and this has led many to assume that James had sent these parties as a deputation, and that they represented his views. It need hardly be said that nothing of the kind is implied by the expression. It is simply another

way of saying that these persons had come from Jerusalem. The opinion of the bishop of the Church at Jerusalem had been stated in the most public way, and there was no danger of the Galatian Christians misunderstanding the expression. The Christians at Jerusalem were the least progressive of all the disciples of that age, and among them were some who held the most extreme views concerning the obligation to observe the law of Moses. It must have been a most difficult task for the resident bishop to hold an even balance among men of widely differing views. But so far as the record throws light upon the subject, there does not seem to be a shadow of proof that his sympathies were enlisted on the wrong side, or that writers like Dr. Whedon should speak of him as "Judaic James." Nothing in his administration, and certainly nothing in his writings, would indicate that there was anything narrow in either his religious views or his personal sympathies.

As a writer James proved himself to be a man of wide sympathies, practical views, and of firm religious principle. His Epistle was needed by the Christians of his own time, and is needed no less by those who bear the Christian name in our own day. The tendency to substitute forms for realities, words for deeds, and social standing for holy living, is deeply rooted in human nature,

and was not long in making itself felt and seen among the early Christians. It has been proposed to establish a new professorship in an American college, to be known as the "Chair of Applied Christianity." If this should be done, the Epistle of James to the "Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion" would serve as an admirable text-book for the students. He was evidently a teacher of applied Christianity, and as long as worldliness continues to encroach upon the Church, and formality to war against the spirituality which is the very life of the Church, so long will this practical message from the inspired leader of the first Christian Church be needed among those who bear the name of Christ in our world.

Having faithfully served his Master and worthily walked in his footsteps for some years, and having also successfully fulfilled the more public obligations which fell to his lot as overseer of the Church, this eminent and saintly man of God at length fell a victim to the fury of Herod, who had become an unrelenting enemy of the new faith. James was a man who had eminently won his title to a martyr's crown. He left behind him an absolutely unblemished reputation, and his name will continue to be an ornament to the noble Church of Pentecost as long as history endures.

JOHN MARK.

A singular incident is mentioned in the second Gospel in connection with the story of the betrayal of Jesus, in which a young man who had ventured to follow his Master was seized by some of the hostile party, and only escaped arrest by leaving his only garment in the hands of those who had seized him, and dashing off among the olive trees which surrounded the place. The story does not present the young man in a very creditable light, and yet there can be very little doubt that he was none other than the author of the Gospel. The mention of such an incident can be accounted for in no other way. It possessed no special importance in itself to the general reader, but must have been remembered with melancholy interest by the young man when, in later years, he undertook the task of writing a biography of his Master. Viewed in this light the mention of the incident adds to the interest of the story, and at the sametime furnishes a striking proof of the authenticity of the Gospel. The young man's courage utterly failed him, and as he disappeared among the dark shadows of the olive trees, no witness of the scene could have believed that he would reappear in a few weeks as one of the most prominent followers of this same Master; that his mother's house was to become the headquarters of the first Christian church;

and that he himself was to become one of the great leaders of the new faith throughout the world.

The unfortunate lapse from duty into which Mark was betrayed when he forsook Paul and Barnabas before their great missionary tour had fairly commenced, has rested like a cloud upon his reputation ever since ; but it is abundantly evident that among the early Christians generally his error was not viewed in a very serious light. He seems to have been an active worker, and to have been personally present in many of the great centres of early Christianity. Universal tradition assigns to him the honour of having founded the great church at Alexandria, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary there seems no good reason to doubt the fact. Our Saviour's frequent repudiation of the religious traditions of the Jews has led many to distrust the word tradition in any possible connection ; but traditional doctrine with a known origin, is a very different thing from traditional history which can be traced back to a very remote date. Mark was an active man, one who became well known in Babylon and Rome, in Judea, and among the churches in Asia Minor, and it is hardly probable that such a man would have omitted Alexandria in his evangelistic expeditions,—the city which next to Rome would have most arrested his attention and challenged his enterprising

spirit. Several of the early Christian historians affirm that Mark was sent to Alexandria by Peter, and that he not only founded the influential church of that great city, but lived to become its first bishop, and finally one of its first martyrs.

As the author of the second Gospel Mark will be always be recognized as one of the most prominent characters among the early Christians. He was universally spoken of by the early Christian writers as the "interpreter" of Peter. This title may have been given him because he acted as interpreter of Peter's teaching and preaching into Greek, and perhaps into Latin and other languages; or it may have been, as many affirm, because he wrote his life of Christ under the immediate direction of Peter, both as regards the historical facts recorded, and the doctrines taught. It is very possible, and indeed probable, that the interpreter performed both these duties. The Gospel seems undoubtedly to have been written for persons at a distance from Judea, and who were not familiar with the language spoken by the Jews of that age. It is certainly a very interesting suggestion that in this Gospel we find the story of the life and teachings of Jesus as they were usually presented by the leader of the original band of personal disciples, and it would not detract from the credit due to the actual writer of the brief biography, if we named the treatise, the Gospel according to Peter.

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The church of Pentecost / by J. M. Thob
Calcutta : Methodist Publishing House ; N
: Eaton and Mains, 1899.
viii, 424p. ; 20cm.

1. Pentecost. 2. Holy Spirit. I. Titl

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